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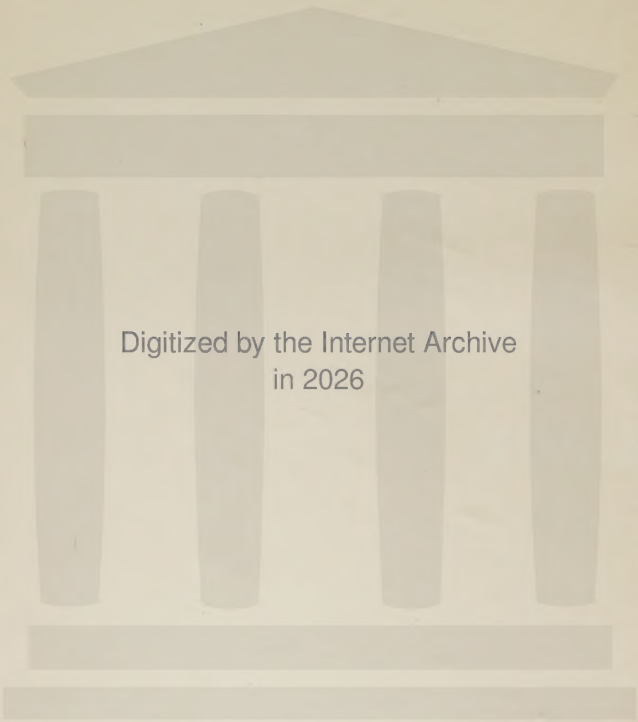
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THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION.

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MCMVII.

THE
EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

THE GIFFORD LECTURES DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS IN SESSIONS 1890-91 AND 1891-92

BY

EDWARD CAIRD

MASTER OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD; LATE PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

FOURTH EDITION

VOL. I.

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DEDICATED

TO THE

REV. BENJAMIN JOWETT

MASTER OF BALLIOL

BY AN OLD PUPIL WHO OWES MUCH TO
HIS TEACHING AND HIS FRIENDSHIP

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

THESE volumes contain the Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of St. Andrews, during Sessions 1890-91 and 1891-92. I have, however, introduced into the First Course two additional Lectures, the Sixth and Twelfth, which seemed necessary to complete the argument.

A Course of Lectures which attempts to give a general view of so great a subject as the Evolution of Religion, without going into detail on any special question, and, so far as possible, without using the technical language of philosophy, must leave much to be desired in precision and completeness of statement. And for a time I thought of using what I had written merely as materials for a more systematic work. But on consideration it seemed to me impossible to change the plan originally adopted, without practically writing a new book. The looser form of Lectures seemed also

to have some advantage in concentrating attention upon the main issues apart from the details of criticism, and, at the same time, in meeting the wants of readers whom a more elaborate treatise might have repelled.

In preparing these Lectures I have specially had in view that large and increasing class who have become, partially at least, alienated from the ordinary dogmatic system of belief, but who, at the same time, are conscious that they have owed a great part of their spiritual life to the teachings of the Bible and the Christian Church. To separate what is permanent from what is transitory in the traditions of the past is a difficult task which every new generation has to encounter for itself. In the present day there are many who find it hard to understand themselves, and "the signs of the times"; nay, who are divided between two feelings: perplexed on the one side by a suspicion that in clinging to the orthodox forms of the creed of Christendom, they may be untrue to themselves, and may even seem to assent to doctrines which they have ceased to believe; and checked on the other side by a fear that, in discarding those forms, they may be casting aside ideas which are essential to their moral and spiritual life. What they want, above all, is some principle or criterion, which will make it possible for them to

distinguish what is tenable from what is untenable in the opposite claims which are made upon their belief—claims which, on both sides, they cannot help to some extent acknowledging. They want some *Eirenicon* to reconcile them with themselves, and to enable them to see that there is no discord between the different aspects of truth which their own experience has forced them to recognise.

In dealing with such difficulties, in the present day, we are greatly assisted by those better methods of historical and philosophical criticism which are making the book of the past so much less hard to read than it was to a previous generation; and, above all, by the great reconciling principle of Development, upon which these methods are based. That principle has for the first time put into our hands "the leaden rule of Lesbian Architecture"[1] which can adapt itself to all the inequalities of the varied and complex structure of human opinion. It has made it possible for us to understand the errors of men in the past as partial and germinating truths; and to detect how ideas grow up under forms which are inadequate to them, and which finally they throw off when they have reached maturity. It has made it possible for us to give a more satisfactory, because a

[1] Aristotle's *Ethics*, v. 10. 7

more discriminating answer to many questions which a previous generation settled with a simple 'yes' or 'no'; to stop the strife of warring dogmatisms by showing that the question is not one between absolute verity and absolute untruth, but between more or less of each. For, so long as we have our life "*am farbigen Abglanz*,"—in the varied and coloured reflex of our partial human thought and feeling; so long as our developing thought is divided as it is, between the truth which we have consciously realised, and that which we are only striving to make conscious, so long the question between different schools or stages of thought will not be simply: 'True or false?' but 'How much truth has been brought to expression, and with what inadequacies and unexplained assumptions?' The idea of development thus enables us to maintain a critical spirit without agnosticism, and a reasonable faith without dogmatism; for it teaches us to distinguish the one spiritual principle which is continuously working in man's life from the changing forms through which it passes in the course of its history. It teaches us to do justice to the past without enslaving the present, and to give freedom to the thought of the present without forgetting that it, in its turn, must be criticised and transcended by the widening consciousness of the future.

The plan of these Lectures is as follows. After the general statement, in the First Lecture, of the problem which I propose to discuss, I have given in the next six Lectures an explanation, as clear as I could make it, of the principles upon which my view of Religion and of its History is based. It is in this part of the book mainly that difficulties are likely to be felt by readers who are not familiar with philosophical discussion. In the rest of the course I have described what I conceive to be the main stages in the development of pre-Christian religions. In doing so I have been led—partly by a desire to get at the issues that are of most importance, and partly by the limitations of my own knowledge—to pass very summarily over the earliest stages of religious thought, and to dwell mainly on those higher forms of religion which may be still said to survive as recognisable influences in modern life. In my Second Course of Lectures I have confined myself almost entirely to the development of the Jewish and the Christian religion. Of course, even these could only be dealt with very briefly and inadequately, though what I have said about them contains the result of the reflexions of many years. What, however, I have aimed at throughout has been rather to illustrate a certain method of dealing

with the facts of religious history in the light of the idea of development, than to exhaust any one application of that method.

Professor Henry Jones, of the University of St. Andrews, has read all the proofs of these volumes, and I owe to him many suggestions and criticisms which have been of great help to me. I have also to acknowledge the valuable assistance of Miss MacLehose, who has prepared the Index for this, as for a former work of mine.

EDWARD CAIRD.

The University,
Glasgow, *December*, 1892.

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LECTURE FIRST.

THE POSSIBILITY OF A SCIENCE OF RELIGION.

The Progress of Science due to the Division of the Sciences—The Advance from Simpler to more Complex Problems—The consequent need for Specific Principles, and the Controversies which arise for want of them—Special difficulties in the case of the Moral Sciences—The Science of Religion—Defects in the earlier Treatment of it—Reasons for the New Interest in the Facts of Religious History—Ideas necessary to explain those Facts—(1) *The* Unity of Mankind—*History of this Idea—Modern Use of it in History and the Philosophy of History—*(2) *The* Development of Man—*History of this Idea—Modern Scientific Use of it—How the History of Man's Development throws light upon the Individual Life—Special Difficulties in applying these Ideas to the History of Religion:* (1) *because Religion is the most concentrated Form of Man's Consciousness of Himself and the World:* (2) *because of the Extreme Variation of the Forms of Religion.*

THE work of science is to find law, order, and reason in what seems at first accidental, capricious and meaningless, and the arduousness of that work grows with the complexity and intricacy of the phenomena to be explained. The freer the play of difference, the harder it is to find the underlying unity: the fiercer the con-

flict of opposites, the more difficult it is to detect the principle out of which it springs. Hence arises the necessity for scientific method. Unconscious of the greatness of the task they were undertaking, the first bold adventurers in the field of science tried to solve the whole problem of the universe at a stroke, and to find some one principle which would account for everything. But it soon became obvious that the citadel of knowledge was not to be taken by storm, but only by advancing parallel after parallel in a long and patient siege. In order to gratify the desire of knowledge, it was necessary in the first instance to restrict it; and the earliest and most secure triumphs of science were won by separating off some comparatively limited sphere of reality, and treating it as a world by itself. Thus the mathematician was content to deal with a world which had been emptied of everything but quantitative relations, and the physicist with a world of motion without life. And it is just because they thus narrowed the problem that they succeeded in solving it. *Divide et impera.* The chaotic aspect which things at first present can be overcome only by the division of the infinite field, and the man of science wins success mainly by confining his attention to one limited sphere of investigation. It is true that, even within this limited sphere he finds a kind of infinity. Mathematics, the earliest of the sciences, still sees an endless series of new problems opening up

before it; and, great as has been the progress of physics in modern times, it has raised more questions than it has answered. But though the field of inquiry opened up by each of these sciences is infinite, it has ceased to present the aspect of a chaos: it is progressively revealed as a cosmos by the application of one simple principle. The general nature of the difficulties to be met with is known, and also the methods by which they can be overcome. The field is not, and cannot be exhausted, but such light has been thrown upon it, that no room is left for the fear that, within that department, the progress of science will ever meet with any insurmountable obstacle, or that any new fact which may be discovered will throw its conceptions back into the confusion from which they have emerged.

From this it follows that the general progress of science is not arrested by the incompleteness of its achievements within any particular department. Although it is not possible that investigation should ever exhaust the sphere of mathematics or physics, it can advance from mathematics to physics, and from physics to biology, with the security of a general who has sufficiently covered a hostile fortress in his rear. Hence the prejudgment or faith that there is no sphere of existence which is exempt from the reign of law, has been gaining ground with every new success of science; in spite of the fact that, in every

step of its advance from the simple to the complex, the difficulty has been becoming greater. Men of science met the more intricate problem of biology with the prestige of their success in the fields of mathematics and physics, and they are now meeting the still harder problem of anthropology with the prestige of their certain, though incomplete, victory in biology. If Hegel raised the cry of triumph too soon, when he asserted that "the secret nature of the universe has no power in itself which could offer permanent resistance to the courage of science," yet it may safely be said that the faith which he expressed rests now on a securer basis than ever before, and that it is continually receiving a kind of objective verification, which it received in no previous age. The belief that in some sense the world is a rational or intelligible system, is indeed one which has never been entirely wanting to mankind, since it is bound up with the very nature of the intelligence; but by the great scientific advance of the past, and especially of the last century, it has ceased to be a vague anticipation, and become—at least to all educated men—a living, and, we might almost say, a palpable assurance.

While I say this, however, I must at the same time point out that the faith and the realisation of it have to contend with a difficulty which seems to grow as we advance. For as we pass from mathematics

to physics and chemistry, and from physics and chemistry to biology and anthropology, there is an increase in the intricacy of the problems we have to solve. Nor is this due merely to the greater number of the phenomena to be explained. It is due also to successive changes in the character of the phenomena themselves, and it points to the need for specific principles of explanation. The transitions, from motion to life, and from life to sensation and consciousness, are qualitative; and the endeavour to extend those principles, which enable us to explain the lower terms of the series, to all its higher terms, is doomed to inevitable failure. Thus the general faith that the world is an intelligible system requires to be justified in a different way in every new science. Physics and chemistry have secrets which cannot be unlocked with a mathematical key; nor would biology ever have made the advance, which in this century it has made, without the aid of a higher conception of evolution, than that which reduces it to a mere "mode of motion." And if the effort which is now being made to explain the nature and history of man is to succeed, it undoubtedly will require a still higher conception or principle of explanation.[1]

[1] *Ultimately*, every object requires the highest principle to explain it, at least for a philosophy that accepts the principle of evolution. But of this we are not here speaking.

The necessity for such an ascending series of specific principles is sometimes concealed from us by the fact that we apply the general terms 'law' and 'cause' to every kind of rational explanation of things, without considering what sort of law and cause is meant. But to say that there is a universal reign of law, and that nothing happens without a cause, is by no means to say that there is one kind of law and one kind of cause for everything. The world is not a congeries of things all on the same level. It is more fitly described as a hierarchy, in which the lower orders of being are both presupposed and explained by the higher. If, therefore, we have a right, as we rise from biology to anthropology, to carry with us the faith that the new sphere, like the old, is under the reign of law, yet we must expect that the new sphere will demand a new law or principle of explanation. And if we try to dispense with such a principle, we shall find many a phenomenon escaping into contingency, and defying all our efforts to find a place for it in our imperfectly conceived cosmos. What is worse, the attempt to subject facts to an insufficient theory is apt to awaken a revolt against the very idea of law, and even to call forth a denial of the possibility of any rational explanation of the facts in question. And the only result that can emerge will be an unprofitable controversy between those

who would solve the difficulty by means of an inadequate principle, and those who maintain that it cannot be solved on any principle whatever, or, in other words, that we must be content with a faith that cannot be rationally justified.

Such reflexions as these naturally arise, when we consider the present state of controversy in regard to the life of man, as a rational or spiritual being. In taking up any question connected with this subject, we are confronted, on the one hand, with those whose scientific principles are too narrow to explain the facts of mind, and especially that moral and religious consciousness with which the highest phenomena of mind are connected. On the other hand, we are confronted with those whose spiritual experience has given them a firm intuitive grasp of these facts, and who, recognising the inadequacy of the explanation offered, set themselves against all theory as tending to explain the facts away. On the one side, we hear the demand that the life of man, like everything else, should be brought under law and interpreted in relation to its causes; but that demand is presented in such a form as practically to involve the reduction of the moral and religious consciousness to an illusion. On the other side, every attempt at scientific explanation is met by an assertion of the freedom of man's will and of the immediacy of his relation to the Infinite Being;

but this assertion of man's spiritual nature is so interpreted as to make him an exception to the order of the world, a being who is not subjected to the reign of law, and cannot be brought into intelligible relation with other natural existences.

But there is little to choose between an illusion and an unintelligibility; and the mind, in virtue of its native confidence in itself, rises in rebellion against both. The nature of the intelligence and its whole past history are our warrant for rejecting any theory which turns man's highest consciousness of himself into an illusion; but we have the same warrant for asserting that *it*, the intelligence itself, cannot be an exception to the general system of the world in which it exists and manifests itself. It is impossible that in its highest life reason can be unfaithful to itself; but it is equally impossible that that highest life should be irrational, or not rationally explicable. To say that the mind is successful abroad, but that it loses all its power at home: that it can penetrate the secret of the world, but that its own being is permanently unfathomable to it, is to put it at variance with itself, and to deny to it its essential attribute of self-consciousness. If anything is intelligible, it must be the movement of the intelligence itself. It is natural, indeed, that as the spiritual life of man is the most complex and difficult of all subjects, the subject which includes and transcends all others, it should be the latest to be

treated on an adequate method. But this is no reason for denying that it can ever enter upon what Kant calls "the secure path of science." It only calls upon us for increased vigilance, so as to make sure that we are omitting no important element in the statement of so comprehensive a problem, and that, in our attempts to solve it, we are not misled into using principles which are inappropriate or inadequate.

It is only with one section, though not the least important section, of this subject that we are here concerned. We have to ask what success has attended, or is likely to attend, the attempt to give scientific explanation of the phenomena of man's religious life. In other words, we have to consider by what method, and upon what principle, the investigation of these phenomena should be conducted, and—so far as is possible in a short course of lectures—to show the nature of the results to which a course of investigation, so conducted, is calculated to lead.

The science of religion is one of the earliest and one of the latest of the sciences. It is one of the earliest: for philosophy, which is the parent of the sciences, is the child of religion; and the first efforts of philosophy are spent in the endeavour to find some kind of *rationale* for the religious consciousness. On the other hand, it is one of the latest: and that for a twofold reason. It is not till quite modern times that the necessary data of the science—the facts to be ex-

plained—have become fully accessible; and even if they had been accessible at an earlier time, they would have excited no intelligent interest in the absence of the ideas and principles by which alone it is possible to explain them. For, in the development of human thought there is always a double process, by which the ideas are brought to the facts, and the facts to the ideas; or, rather, these are two factors in one process, the warp and the woof, which are continually being woven together into the web of man's intellectual life. The growing curiosity which leads men to investigate fields of knowledge hitherto neglected or even regarded as unworthy of notice, is the result of the development of man's spirit, and of the half-unconscious action of the new ideas which that development brings with it; and, on the other hand, these new ideas, as we become more definitely aware of them, not only give new interest to the facts, but enable us to explain them. This is a view of our intellectual progress which avoids at once the false empiricism that sees nothing in growing knowledge but an accumulation of objective materials, and the narrow *a priori* philosophy which regards truth as born, like Athene, from our brains, without the marriage of the soul with the world. It is undoubtedly in and through experience that all our knowledge comes, and looking inward without looking outward is a process which has never

brought any gain to the intelligence of man. *Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu.* But, on the other hand, the world with which experience makes us acquainted is not something foreign to the intelligence, nor in seeking to understand *it* do we need to lose *ourselves.* On the contrary, it is just in the effort to understand the world that the intelligence grows and comes into possession of itself; and, conversely, its understanding of the world is conditioned by its own growth. The world cannot answer unless the mind question it, and the nature of the questions is at every step determined by the stage of development which the mind has attained. Thus it may for a long time remain utterly blind to facts for which it is not yet ripe; and the same facts may subsequently become its central interest, just because they appeal to a new consciousness which is growing up within it. In other words, they furnish it with the means of answering a question which, by its own development, it is then constrained to ask, and thus supply the nutriment it needs for its further growth. The dawning idea makes the facts interesting and intelligible, and the facts make it possible to verify the idea, and bring it to explicit consciousness. Thus, even in the most empirical process of science, we have no mere importing into the mind of an external matter alien to its own nature, but a satisfaction of native impulses

which enables it to attain a clearer consciousness of itself. It would, indeed, be strange if it were otherwise. We can take into our bodies only what the nature of these bodies enables us to assimilate, —only what they can use to build themselves up into their matured structure. It would be strange if our minds were receptacles of all kinds of matter, without reference to their own needs or their own constitution. The mind, indeed, is in one point different from the body, for, in a sense, there is nothing alien to it; it has a *universal* appetite and can assimilate all kinds of materials of knowledge. But it can do so only in its own way and in its own time, and it refuses or even repels any information which does not answer its own questions, and so contribute to its own development.

It may, therefore, be desirable, before entering upon our subject, to ask a preliminary question. What is it that has awakened the new modern interest in the science of religion, and has given rise to the persistent attempts which are now being made to investigate the facts of religious history in all times and places? What is it that has made us carry our inquiries beyond the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which are directly connected with our own religious life, and beyond the classical mythology, which is immediately bound up with our literary culture,—that has set to our

scholars the task of analyzing the Sacred Books of all nations, and seeking for the "key of all the mythologies"? What is it that has raised the folk-lore, which was formerly left to children and old women, into an object of keen scientific curiosity, and led an army of careful observers to record with such perseverance the crudest superstitions of savages and their most wayward fancies about the constitution of the universe and the powers that rule over it? The folk-lore has not ceased to be childish, and, though it may carry in it some elements of genuine imagination—some hints at a poetic idealisation of nature which are worth preserving—it is not for these grains of gold that we turn over the infinite heaps of sand. Nothing can be more coarse and repulsive than are many of the superstitious customs of savages; nothing can be more absurd and irrational than most of their ideas as to the constitution of the natural and the spiritual world. No civilised being could possibly look to such a source, either for moral guidance or intellectual light. What lends them their interest must, therefore, be their bearing on some new question which we are forced to ask; it must be their value as giving further definition or illustration of some principle which we seek to verify. I do not, of course, mean that every one who feels the impulse to investigate in this new branch of inquiry is conscious of the

full meaning of what he is doing. The spirit of the time enlists many servants to whom it does not communicate the purpose of the commands it issues. Hundreds feel the pressure of a new desire, the stimulus of a new curiosity, for one who asks himself distinctly what it is that he wants, or why he seeks to fill his mind with details which to a previous age would have seemed intellectual lumber, as useless to remember as the scandal of a village or the advertisements of a daily paper. But such unconsciousness does not lessen the significance of the fact. The δαίμων that thus possesses men is not a meaningless impulse, like a taste for collecting books whose value lies in their errata. It is a spiritual need, an intellectual and even a practical want of man's spirit, which has been awakened by its past growth, and the satisfaction of which is necessary to its further growth. And undoubtedly it is well for us not only to obey the spirit of the time, but also to ask what it means, to try to understand the interest which such inquiries awaken in us and to estimate the good that can come to us by discovering the answer to them. For this, if we can attain it, will tend to give method and direction to our efforts, and it may to some extent prevent us from wandering into paths that lead to nothing, or attaching too much or too little importance to particular results.

A full answer to this question cannot yet be given; but it is possible at once to indicate one or two points which lie almost on the surface. First of all, we may observe that the idea of the *unity of mankind* has within the last century become not merely a dogma, but an almost instinctive presupposition of all civilised men, and that, at the same time, it has been freed from the theological reservations and saving clauses with which it was formerly encumbered, even among those who, in a sense, accepted it as a truth. We know now, in a way in which it was never known before, that humanity is a genus which has no proper species; *i.e.*, that the divisions between men are as nothing in comparison with the fundamental fact of self-consciousness which unites them all to each other. Ancient society was built on the principle of natural kinship, and therefore on a principle which carried with it tribal or national exclusiveness, even where it did not set up further barriers between the members of the society by immovable divisions of family from family, rank from rank, and caste from caste. The artificial unity of the Roman empire, however, with its equal justice and its rigid conception of the rights of the individual person, did much *negatively* to break down these walls of separation between Greek and barbarian, Jew and Gentile, patrician and plebeian, master and slave. And Christianity sought *positively* to knit men to-

gether by a spiritual bond of fellowship, of which all men were regarded as capable. It is true that Christianity for a long time hid its levelling power in the very excess of an idealism, which treated worldly distinctions as indifferent, and *therefore* allowed them to subsist. But by treating all such distinctions as accidental differences of outward position which a few years must terminate, and by disregarding them in the order of the church, it spread through all the nations which it reached a consciousness of the infinite value of each individual soul and of the comparative unimportance of the things that in this world divide one man from, or set him above, another,—a consciousness which in the long run must be fatal to all absolute claims of superiority. The belief that the best which man has it in him to do or to be, springs out of that which is common to all, and therefore that the highest good is open to all, is fatal to all systems of privilege, and it is equally fatal to all national exclusiveness. In the slow progress of humanity, indeed, there is always a long way between the premises and the conclusion, between the germinating of an idea in the religious life and its manifestation as a transforming social principle; and it may work for a long time unconsciously as such a principle before it is explicitly recognised in its universal meaning. Yet, though a thousand years are as one day in the secular process of development,

which is the manifestation of the divine spirit in man, the days and the years come to an end, and the fruit follows by an inevitable necessity upon the seed.

The application of this idea to the case before us it is not difficult to see. The hyper-idealism of early Christianity refused to question the justice of slavery in private life and of despotism in the State. It declared that the powers that be are ordained of God, without asking how they had been established or how they exercised their authority. And the mediæval church was inclined in its asceticism rather to emphasise than to criticise the division between the spiritual and the secular orders; though it soon found itself forced by an inevitable logic to insist that the powers of the latter should be used in such a way as not to interfere with the higher interests of the former; and in time this claim inevitably grew into the demand of Hildebrand that the world should be subjected to the church. But the Reformation brought with it a better solution of the difficulty, leading, as it did, to the denial of the division between world and church as anything more than a distinction of outward order, and to the assertion that the divine principle could be realised, and ought to be realised, in the life of the laity as much as in that of the clergy, in the State as much as in the Church. In this way the theological limit to the realisation of the divine principle in man was broken down. The new

wine of Christian cosmopolitanism burst through the old bottles of spiritual and secular exclusiveness. The divine right of priests in the church and of a royal or noble class in the world was set aside for the divine right of humanity. And the idea of a unity in men deeper than all racial and social distinctions, deeper than all distinctions of culture or even of religion, became for the first time a living force.

As usual, the first expression of this truth was extremely one-sided. The cosmopolitanism of the last century carried the abstract assertion of the equality of men to the paradox that civilisation itself is a moral disadvantage, and that the genuine voice of humanity is to be heard only from the natural man, "the noble savage." But the irrational consequences of a theory which treated the unity of human nature as the negation of all the different forms in which it has been or can be realised, must not hide from us the immense gain for man's intellectual and moral life which lies in the recognition of that unity. Looking at it in the former respect, with which we are more directly concerned, we see that it furnished the intellectual key to a problem which the increasing intercourse of mankind, since the discovery of the New World, had been pressing upon men's minds with ever greater insistence. The conviction that God has formed of one blood all the nations that dwell upon the earth—interpreted as meaning that, as regards

that which is deepest and most important in human nature, men are essentially equal—supplied for the first time a point of view from which human life in all its heights and depths, and in the whole range of its history, could be brought within the sphere of science. It swept away at once the literary prejudices which caused classical models to be regarded as the only humane letters, and the religious prejudices which consecrated the history of the chosen people and of the early Christian church as the only sacred history. Above all, it set to science the problem how, out of our common humanity, it is possible to explain the almost infinitely diversified forms of culture, literary, social, and religious, which we meet with in different times and in different parts of the world. If we are "not to count anything human alien" to us, we must be able to understand every such form, not merely in the sense of gathering together the facts regarding it and observing their general character, or even of discovering the laws of their co-existence and succession; but in the sense of throwing ourselves into them, of realising the states of mind in which they arose, the process of thought and feeling by which they grew, and the connexion of the results to which they developed with our own life and thought. In other words, this principle makes us conscious that we have not solved the scientific problem suggested by the lives of other men till we are able to live them

over again, to reproduce their movement in living imagination, and to repeat in conscious thought the unconscious logic of their growth. It is this desire for a living picture, still more for a *rationale*, of human life in all its forms, which prompts our minute research into even the most trivial point of custom and observance, of myth and doctrine, in ancient and modern nations. It is this which makes our anthropologists at once so greedy of facts and so eagerly anxious to penetrate through the mere facts to the principle that explains their genesis. We want not only to believe in the unity of man, the identity of the spirit of humanity in all times and places, but to *see* it; and we cannot see it aright unless we both feel and think it, unless both by imagination and reason we realise how, under the conditions, we might ourselves have developed into such ways of thinking and living. It is this impulse to revivify and reconstruct the facts,—to make the past into a living present, while yet we understand its inner meaning in a way in which the present can never be understood by those who live in it,—it is this that characterises the modern scientific spirit and differentiates it so completely from a mere casual and external curiosity. And it is manifest that such an impulse can never be satisfied with any mere empirical collection of information, which still leaves us on the outside of that which we are observing; nor, indeed, with anything

short of a real appreciation, both sympathetic and intuitive, of the nature of the process by which the one spirit of man manifests itself in all this difference of forms, and through them all is continually advancing to a fuller realisation and a deeper comprehension of itself.

And this leads me further to point out that it is not merely the bare idea of the unity of man which now furnishes the guiding principle of science in this department, but the idea of that unity *as manifesting itself in an organic process of development*—first, in particular societies, and, secondly, in the life of humanity as a whole. This also is a conception which has gradually been gaining ground ever since the beginning of the Christian era, but which has for the first time taken an effective form, as an instrument of science, in the present day. The favourite idea of classical antiquity was not the idea of progress, but the idea of a cycle of changes in which departure *from* the original unity and return *to* it, or, as we should say, differentiation and integration, are not united, but follow each other. This idea seems to be adopted even by Aristotle. The constant march of the Roman State through campaign after campaign, during century after century, to the empire of the world, suggested to Livy the conception of a process of outward growth, which, however, seemed to him to be accompanied by inward decay; for the power and

wealth which patriotism and discipline had won had, in his opinion, proved in the end fatal to the virtues which gave rise to them. The Hebrew Scriptures carry us a step beyond this: for prophecy—in so far as it was not mere soothsaying, but a foresight based upon insight—implied a discernment of seeds of good and evil in the present which must necessarily ripen to a harvest of greater good and evil in the future; and, in this sense, prophecy was just development read forward. And when Christ spoke of his own ethical doctrine as a fulfilment of that which potentially or in germ was contained in the law, and at the same time represented that doctrine as itself only a grain of mustard-seed which was one day to grow into the greatest of all trees; still more, when he spoke of the corn of wheat that was to multiply by dying, he gave a clearer expression to the idea of development than it had ever before received, and even perhaps than it has received till quite recent times. By St. Paul this thought was caught up and presented in a more imposing though less suggestive form, under the guise of a great providential world-drama, in which the whole history of the Jews is viewed as a long legal preparation for the new era of the Gospel. And the same idea appears in St. Augustine's *City of God*, only with the additional suggestion that another act of the same drama is found in the history of the Romans, by whom the nations

of the enslaved world were brought together under one universal empire. It is true that Augustine sets the "two cities" in abrupt antagonism to each other, and regards the secular power as the natural enemy, in conflict with which the church had to show its higher spiritual energy. But when the two powers were thus connected and compared, the thought could not fail to arise that the State was not merely the opposite of the Church, but that, on the contrary, it provided the peaceful sphere within which alone the operations of the Church were possible. Hence arose the conception of the two "preparations for the gospel," an outward and an inward preparation—in the history of Rome and in the history of Judaism respectively—which culminated in the union of the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Church. This conception furnished the guiding principle of what we may call the mediæval philosophy of history; and, as such, it is presented to us in the great poem of Dante. But for a deeper and less spectacular expression of that connexion between the different phases of the life of individuals, of nations, and of humanity, which we call development, we have to wait till a much later time. The intuitive genius of Vico discerned the importance of the idea at the dawn of the modern period; but the full perception of its value as a key to the history of man and of the world was reserved for the end of the last, and

the beginning of this century. It was then that Lessing, Kant, and Herder gave that decisive impulse under which the principle of development was carried into biology by Goethe, Schelling, and many eminent scientific men, while Hegel made it the leading idea of his philosophy, subjected it to a more penetrating analysis than it had ever before received, and applied it with wonderful insight and grasp to the political, the artistic, the religious, and the philosophical history of man. After these we need only refer to the names of Lamarck and Comte in France, of Darwin and Spencer in England, and of Von Hartmann and Wundt in Germany, as writers who have done much to throw light on various aspects of the idea and to give it new applications. We may, indeed, say without much exaggeration that the thought of almost all the great speculative or scientific writers of this century has been governed and guided by the principle of development, if not directly devoted to its illustration.

It is by the aid of this principle and by its aid only, that the other idea of which we have already spoken—the idea of the unity of mankind—can be made fully intelligible and applicable to the facts of history. In other words, the unity of mankind must for our purpose be interpreted as involving not only the identity of human nature in all its various manifestations in all nations and countries, but also as

implying that in their *co-existence* these manifestations can be connected together as different correlated phases of one life, and that in their *succession* they can be shown to be the necessary stages of one process of evolution. The conception of development is thus a corollary which cannot be disjoined from the principle of the unity of man itself. For if it be true that we can find light in the history of man only as we throw ourselves into it and live it over again in ourselves, it is only by the aid of the idea of evolution that we can bridge over the gulf between ourselves and the men of an earlier and simpler stage of culture. Without the aid of this idea our sympathies will not stretch far enough. It is, indeed, comparatively easy for us to recognise the identity of a common nature through the differences of language and custom that separate us from nations like the modern Germans or French, who stand, on the whole, on the same level of civilisation with ourselves, and are embraced in the same general spirit of the time. By a further stretch of effort we can reach back to those previous stages of culture that still survive in a recognisable form in our own lives. We can make ourselves citizens of Rome or Athens, because in literature and philosophy, in politics and laws, Rome and Athens still live with us as easily distinguishable influences. And our religion still preserves so much trace of its Jewish source that it is not very difficult for us to realise in some

measure the spirit of the prophets and psalmists of Israel. But when we are required to widen our view still farther, and extend the same living sympathy—the sympathy out of which alone true knowledge can spring—to early India and Egypt, to the primitive civilisations of Babylon and Mexico and Peru; still more, when we have to include in our idea of humanity the lives of utterly uncivilised races and to realise the first obscure beginnings of religion and morality, nay, even to reproduce the dawn of unconscious reason in the formation of language,—the line of continuity seems to be stretched to the breaking-point. And it must needs break but for the help of the idea of evolution, which has at once created a new interest in the earliest vestiges of human life, and has supplied the key for their explanation. This idea, in fact, is the most potent instrument for bringing back difference to identity which has ever been put into the hands of science; and, without it, it would be impossible to hope for a real understanding of the facts of the history of man, a problem which in its complexity and difficulty includes and transcends the complexities and difficulties of all the other problems of science.

One other point may be mentioned. The study of the historical development of man, especially in respect of his higher life, is not only a matter of an external or merely speculative curiosity; it is closely connected with the development of that life in our-

selves. For we learn to know ourselves, first of all, in the mirror of the world; or, in other words, our knowledge of our own nature and of its possibilities grows and deepens with our understanding of what is without us, and most of all with our understanding of the general history of man. It has often been noticed that there is a certain analogy between the life of the individual and that of the race; and even that the life of the individual is a sort of epitome of the history of humanity. But, as Plato already discovered, it is by reading the large letters that we learn to interpret the small. If in the biography of each of us the history of mankind is repeated, yet it is repeated in an abbreviated and therefore confused way; in a way analogous to that whereby all the stages of animal life are reproduced in the development of the human embryo. But, as no one could have discovered what these stages were by a mere observation of the growth of the embryo, as, on the contrary, we are forced to interpret the stages in the life of the embryo by reference to the divisions of the animal kingdom, so it is here. The history of the individual mind cannot be used by itself, at least in the first instance, as a key to the history of the race, but rather *his* life becomes intelligible by means of the large letters in which its stages are written in the life of mankind as a whole. We first come to understand the obscure struggle of different

tendencies within us, when we regard them as the reproduction in us of great conflicts of race and creed, which once set man against man and even nation against nation. These great forces are also warring in us. But in the *microcosm* the arena is too close, the forms of the combatants are too indistinct, for the issues to be clearly seen, unless we have identified them under the more conspicuous shapes in which they appear in the *macrocosm*. Hence our increasing knowledge of the facts of history and of the ideas by which they can be interpreted is not merely the addition of a new chapter to science, but it throws a new light upon our own inner life. In view of the ethical and religious development of humanity, which is the presupposition of our own spiritual life, we are enabled to discern more definitely the moral and religious meaning of our own experience, and, on the other hand, we are taught to regard our own lives as having their main value in the contribution which they make, in turn, to the growing life of humanity.

To sum up what has been said. We have seen that the studies usually embraced under the name of anthropology, and of which the science of religion is one of the most important, have risen into a prominence and attracted an attention unprecedented in any previous time; and that they have done so, not only because the extension of our know-

ledge of the world's inhabitants and of their history has supplied the necessary data, but because the progress of man's intelligence has brought with it certain ideas, which at once excite our interest in such inquiries, and furnish us with a means of solving the difficulties which they bring with them. These are the ideas of the unity of man, and of the organic connexion of life between the different parts of the human family, and also between the different stages in that secular development of man's spirit, to which all the various forms of culture in all the nations of the world ultimately serve as contributions. These ideas we do not put forward as dogmas,—for, indeed, there are many difficulties, both in their analysis and their verification, on which we have as yet said nothing,—but we point to them as indicating the problems with which at the present time it has become necessary for science to deal, the questions which by its own development the human spirit is now compelled to answer. This necessity lies in the fact that it is only through a deepened consciousness of the world that the human spirit can solve its own problem. Especially is this true in the region of anthropology. For the inner life of the individual is deep and full, just in proportion to the width of his relations to other men and things; and his consciousness of what he is in himself

as a spiritual being is dependent on a comprehension of the position of his individual life in the great secular process by which the intellectual and moral life of humanity has grown and is growing. Hence the highest practical as well as speculative interests of men are connected with the new extension of science which has given fresh interest and meaning to the whole history of the race.

Now, these remarks have special application to the history of religion. Without as yet attempting to define religion, or to give any precise account of its characteristics, we may go so far as to say that a man's religion is the expression of his ultimate attitude to the universe, the summed-up meaning and purport of his whole consciousness of things. How, and how far he rises above the parts to the whole; how, and how far he gathers his scattered consciousness of the world and of himself to a unity; how, and how far he makes anything like a final return upon himself from all his fortunes and experiences, is shown more clearly in his religion than in any other expression of his inner life. Whatever else religion may be, it undoubtedly is the sphere in which man's spiritual experience reaches the utmost concentration, in which, if at all, he takes up a definite attitude towards his whole natural and spiritual environment. In short, it is

the highest form of his consciousness of himself in his relation to all other things and beings; and, if we want a brief abstract and epitome of the man, we must seek for it here or nowhere. But just for this reason the problem presented by the history of religion contains in an intensified form all the difficulties which we find in all the other aspects of man's life. All the complexity and diversity, all the opposition and conflict, which make it so hard to find a principle of law and order in the life of man as a physical, moral, and intellectual being, reach their extreme form in his religious history.

Connected with this is a difficulty which has troubled many writers on the science of religion—the difficulty of finding any one quality or characteristic which is common to all religions; for in his religious life man has sounded the whole gamut of possible forms of consciousness, from the highest inspiration to the lowest superstition. To take only a few instances: there are religions of terror and religions of love, religions of hope and religions of despair, religions in which the gods seem to be worshipped mainly as beings who can help or hinder man's effort after his own finite ends, and religions in which he is called on to make absolute surrender of all such ends, and even to merge his very life in the infinite. Whatever element be named as

essential to religion, it seems easy to oppose a negative instance to it. For instance, Kant tells us that "without a belief in a *future life* no religion can be conceived to exist." But, to mention only the most obvious facts, the early Jewish religion was without such a belief; and, if some idea as to a life beyond the grave has formed a part of most religions, yet there are many in which it was by no means a prominent or important part. The religions of classical antiquity were for the most part centred in the domestic or the national life, and the immortality thought of by their votaries was the immortality of the family or the state. On the other hand, there have been nations, such as the Egyptians, for which the concerns of the other world and the future life seemed altogether to dwarf the interests of the present. The Egyptian lived among tombs whose size and splendour reduced into insignificance the dwellings of the living; and the most characteristic features of his mythology were representations of the death and resurrection of nature in winter and summer, as types symbolising the death and resurrection of man.

Again, in its attitude towards *nature*, religion has passed through every phase which it is possible to conceive. At one extreme we have the mythology of the Vedic hymns, in which the "bright ones," the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon,

with the various elemental powers of storm and wind, are the only distinctly recognised divinities. At some distance from this stands the Jewish religion, which abhors any mingling of the creature with the Creator, and treats nature not as the manifestation of God, but rather as a weapon in His hand, which He has made, and which He breaks in pieces when He has done with it. Lastly, at the opposite extreme, we find the Buddhist religion, treating the whole objective world as an illusion from which it is the highest aim of the devotee to free himself.

Again, the religious view of *man himself* and his relation to the Divine Being passes through a similar series of kaleidoscopic changes. Sometimes, as in Greece, man is the one finite being, whose form is transferable to the divine, and the gods are, above all, regarded as the powers that preside over the life of the family or the state. Sometimes, on the other hand, man seems to seek his gods at the farthest possible point from himself, and to find divinity in plants, in animals, in almost anything and everything rather than in humanity. And anthropologists have found good evidence of a state of civilisation, in which men could think of kinship as a sacred bond only when they regarded it as a participation in the blood of a *zoomorphic* or *phytomorphic* god or totem.

To take one other illustration: it might seem that, if anything is essential to religion, it is a belief in the objective reality of God as apart from the religious sentiment of His worshippers; and in some forms of religion we even find Him treated as a purely external power, with whom no inward relation is possible. Yet we find at least one great religion, that of Buddha, which begins with the negation of all the objective gods of earlier Hindooism, or the reduction of them to parts in the great illusion of outward existence, and which at last finds the divine, if anywhere, only in the self-negating process of the finite mind, and the *Nirvana* which is supposed to be its result. Finally, even within the compass of the one religion, we find something analogous to all these forms. For Christianity, in the course of its history, passes through phases which recall the opposite forms of polytheism and monotheism, of pantheism and dualism. We find it at one time united with the ascetic morality of the cloister, which carries the negation of nature to the verge of self-annihilation, and at another time associated with an ethics which idealises the natural desires and affections, and a poetry which finds God in nature.

These variations are so great that it cannot seem wonderful if some are inclined to deny that there is any unity beneath them; or that the succession of

religions is anything but the play of the wayward fancy of man, in a region which is outside of the sphere of reason and experience. Yet even so, the problem of the changes of religion would form part of the general problem of human history. Even if religion were a madness of humanity, an illusory form of consciousness destined ultimately to disappear, there must be a method in it which we are interested to discover. We cannot suppose any great province of the life of rational beings to lie outside of the general development of reason. Even atheism or agnosticism involves a definite attitude towards the ultimate problem of human life; and if it is the highest attitude possible to man, it must show itself to be the last term, or one of the elements in the last term, in which the whole process of development is summed up. For the modern ideas of the organic unity and the organic evolution of man, which are the presuppositions underlying all our investigation into the history of humanity, inevitably compel us to seek for the one principle of life which masks itself in all these various forms, and which through them all is striving towards the complete realisation of itself.

LECTURE SECOND.

DIFFERENT METHODS OF DEFINING RELIGION.

Religion and the Theory of Religion—How to define Religion—Definition to be sought not in a Common Element in all Religions, but in a Common Principle from which they spring—Necessity of this according to the Idea of Development—The Explanation of Religion not to be derived from its Earliest Forms—First Definition of Religion as Conscious Relation to a Divine Being—Objections to it—Further step gained by consideration of the Historical Development of Religion—Meaning of the Question: How Religion is possible.

THE object of the last lecture was to show that the spiritual progress of man brings with it, on the one hand, a new kind of interest in the history of that progress, and, on the other hand, new ideas which, in explaining the facts of history, derive from them their own exposition and verification. The ideas of the organic unity of mankind, and of the organic process of development in which that unity is manifested, have given scientific value to many objects and events which formerly were matters of mere antiquarian interest. For in the light of these ideas the facts of history cease to be barren, and

become a potent help in solving some of the highest problems of religion and morality. They enable us to read the secrets of our own lives in the large letters of the life of the race, and so, by reflexion, to understand the spiritual forces that are working within us. Especially is this the case with the great problem of religion, in which, if anywhere, the meaning and interest of our spiritual life is summed up and concentrated.

It is true that it is one thing to have a religion, and quite another thing to understand what religion is; still more, to trace out the full meaning of religion in the light of its history. Nor can it be said that the former is in any direct way dependent upon the latter. Here, as elsewhere, theory comes after the fact which it seeks to explain; and it would seem to be as absurd to attempt to nourish religious life on a theory of its own nature, as to try to feed the body with a treatise on physiology. Yet this analogy should not be pressed too far; for even in its earliest stages religion is a process which involves consciousness; and although consciousness is not in the first instance reflective, yet in the course of its development it inevitably becomes so. The elevation of the soul to God, and the surrender of the will to the inspiration which the consciousness of God brings with it, may take place without any need being felt for a logical proof of the

existence of the Divine being, or for a criticism of the process whereby the idea of such a being is awakened and developed within us. They may take place even apart from any attempt to distinguish the elements which enter into our thought of God, or to determine their relation to each other. But inevitably, insensibly, in the growth of the human spirit, a time comes when such questions must begin to trouble it, and constrain it to advance from religion to theology, or as mediæval writers put it, from *veneratio* to *delectatio*, from experience and feeling to reflexion and self-consciousness. In our day especially, when the conceptions of science and philosophy have, in so large measure, penetrated into the general consciousness of men, and transformed their whole view of themselves and the world, it is almost impossible for any one to dwell permanently in the region of simple faith, and to escape altogether the questionings of reflexion. And he who has once listened to these questionings can never, without some attempt to answer them, regain the intuitive certainty of God which he has lost. The spirit of the time compels us to build our temple with arms in our hands, to maintain our religious life amid the jar of controversy, and with the consciousness of many difficulties which demand, but cannot always obtain from us, a rational solution. The advance of science, of historical investigation, of philosophical criticism, has forced us to realise how much is required for the evi-

dence of any idea so far-reaching as a religious principle must necessarily be; it has made us mistrustful of the easy methods in which an earlier age was content to find the proof of a foregone conclusion. The external scaffolding on which religious belief formerly rested has in great part fallen away, and we are obliged to look for a natural and rational basis for many of those convictions which were then propped up by adventitious supports. In this way religion and the theory of religion have been brought into closer relations than they ever before needed to maintain, and there is a more direct reaction of the latter upon the former. This, no doubt, has its dangers; dangers of which we are made painfully conscious in the inadequate and futile discussion of great questions which invades even our newspapers; but it has compensating advantages. For, if the discussions of the market-place are apt to be superficial, the philosophy which is not obliged to explain itself outside of the school is prone to become scholastic, and to lose all vital relation to that immediate experience of which it claims to be the higher interpretation and vindication.

In seeking to find such an interpretation and vindication of the religious consciousness, it seems necessary to start, if not with an exact definition, at least with some general idea of the nature of religion, which may enable us to mark out the limits

of the field we have to survey. But, owing to the immense range of variation in the phenomena usually classed as religious, it is no easy task to do even so much as this. For what idea of religion can be found which will not fail to include some of the many species of religions enumerated at the end of the last lecture? The question would be unanswerable, if we were obliged—as many writers on this subject have supposed they were obliged—to look for some one quality common to all religions as the basis of our definition. For such a quality, if it could be found, would be something so vague and abstract, that little or nothing could be made of it. The truth, however, is that such a definition would not supply what in this case we want. The different religions are not merely co-ordinate species varying, one in this direction, the other in that, from a single general type. They are, in many cases at least, to be regarded rather as successive stages in one process of development, in which the later include and presuppose the earlier. As there is little to be gained by asking what is common to the bud, the leaf, the flower, and the fruit of the tree, so there is little to be gained by asking what is common to the Vedic Polytheism of early India, to the later Brahmanic system and to the religion of Buddha, if these, as we find to be the case, are only different stages in one great movement of religious life. There

is little to be gained by considering what is common to Judaism and to Christianity, when the latter springs from a soil prepared by the former. And even those religions which have no such direct historical connexion, and which therefore it would be difficult to regard as prior and posterior stages of the same course of development, are nevertheless not strictly co-ordinate with each other. The Greek, the Latin, the Celtic, and the German forms of the Aryan mythology are not reciprocally exclusive logical species which are united only by a common generic quality, but rather members of one family, each of which emphasises an element that is present but latent in all the others. And the same truth is illustrated on a still wider scale if we go beyond special religions to such general ideal types of religion as are indicated by the terms Polytheism, Pantheism, and Monotheism; for these are not really species of religion which are co-ordinate with each other, but phases of religious belief, which represent different stages in the development of the idea of religion. In the sequel, an attempt will be made to show that Pantheism is simply the culminating phase of Polytheism, and that Monotheism, in the strict sense of the term, always arises in direct opposition to both. If this view be correct, it would be idle to seek for any common element in these different forms; or, if we found it, to suppose that in it we had a real

principle of unity, by reference to which we might classify the religions, and determine their relations to each other. Finally, any definition which we might derive from the analysis and comparison of the higher forms of religion would be too lofty and comprehensive to apply to the superstitions of savages; yet in these superstitions we recognise the obscure beginnings of religious experience, and they could not be left out of account in any definition of religion. Nay, if the different religions be stages in a single development, it is just in such elementary phenomena, if anywhere, that we must find the common element of which we are in search; for, *ex hypothesi*, the simplest religion must still contain the essence of religion, and it will contain little or nothing else to disguise that essence from us. Thus it appears that the search for a common element in all religions is entirely misleading. If it yielded any result at all, it would constrain us to define religion in terms of the lowest possible form of it: and it could not yield even so much as this, unless, in the order of development, each successive religion at once included and transcended the previous one. If, on the other hand, a religion ever arose by movement of recoil against an earlier religion—and this seems actually to be the case with Buddhism in relation to Brahmanism —then the clue of the common element would be entirely lost to us, and we should be obliged to

reject from our definition even the elements that appear in its earliest form.[1]

What, however, we really want in a definition of religion is no such *summum genus*, reached by omission of all that is characteristic of the species, but a germinative principle, a principle of the genesis of religions. Such a principle will reveal itself not so much in each religion taken separately as in all the religions contemplated as stages in a process; and, most of all, in the transitions of thought whereby one religion develops out of another, or asserts itself in conflict against it. Or, if we can expect to find it revealed in any one religion, it must be in the highest rather than the lowest. For a principle of development necessarily manifests itself most clearly in the most mature form of that which develops. As we take our definition of man, not from the embryo or the infant but from the grown man, who first shows what was hidden

[1] It is, of course, still open to any one to maintain that, *dialectically*, the later stage in a development includes the earlier, although it is related thereto only in the way of opposition or negation: in other words, it implies and pre-supposes it as a simpler or more elementary stage of thought. But this idea, to which we shall have to return in the sequel, cannot help any one who is seeking to define religion by reference to a supposed common element, as distinguished from a common principle, in all religions, and who therefore regards the different religions simply as reciprocally exclusive logical species falling under one abstract genus.

in both; so, in like manner, in defining religion, we must look to Christianity rather than to Judaism, to Buddhism rather than to the Vedic Polytheism, and to all the forms of worship which we find among civilised peoples rather than to the superstitions of savages. When, indeed, we turn back from the developed organism to the embryo, from the man to the child, we find that a study of the process of genesis casts no little light upon the nature of the being which is its result. The man becomes in a higher sense intelligible, when we trace him back to the child. But, primarily and in the first instance, it is the developed organism that explains the germ from which it grew, and, without having seen the former, we could have made nothing of the latter. No examination of the child could enable us to prophesy the man, if we had not previously had some experience of mature manhood; still less would an examination of the seed or the embryo reveal to us the distinct lineaments of the developed plant or animal or man. Nor would our insight be greatly helped by a knowledge of the environment in which the process of development was to take place. And the same is true of religion. It is the full growth and expansion of this mighty tree, under whose shadow the generations of men have rested, that enables us to understand its obscure beginnings,

when it was "the least of all seeds." Development is not simply the recurrence of the same effects in similar circumstances, not simply the maintenance of an identity under a variation determined by external conditions. Hence it is impossible, from the phenomena of one stage of the life of a developing being, to derive laws which will adequately explain the whole course of its existence. The secret of the peculiar nature of such a being lies just in the way of regular transition in which, by constant interaction with external influences, it widens the compass of its life, unfolding continually new powers and capacities—powers and capacities latent in it from the first, but not capable of being foreseen with any definiteness by one who had seen only the beginning. It follows that, in the first instance at least, we must read development *backward* and not *forward*, we must find the key to the meaning of the first stage in the last; though it is quite true that, afterwards, we are enabled to throw new light upon the nature of the last, to analyse and appreciate it in a new way, by carrying it back to the first. We may derive an illustration of this characteristic of development from the *idea of development itself;* for the idea of development is one of the latest ideas whose meaning and value has been brought to light by the progress of man, and it is itself the much wanted key to

the history of that progress. If it has to some extent ceased to be true that, as Goethe says in the *Faust*, the "history of the past is a book with seven seals," and that what the historian discovers to be its spirit is only the spirit of the historian himself, '*des Herren eigner Geist*,' this is due, more than anything else, to the fact that the idea of development has enabled us to recognise the identical spirit of man in all the enormous cycle of changes through which it has passed, yet without suppressing or disguising the differences that separate men from each other in different ages, and under different social conditions.

It follows from these considerations that, in seeking for a definition of religion, we are not to look for a common element in all religions. For, as we have seen, such a way of defining would force us at once to raise the difficult, or rather, impossible question, "what is the lowest kind of spiritual experience which we can think worthy of the name of a religion?" And any possible answer to that question would cut across the line of development by an arbitrary determination of the limits within which we shall confine the meaning of the word. What we have to look for, on the contrary, is a principle which is bound up with the nature of man, and which, therefore, manifests itself in all stages of his development. A definition of religion in this sense, if we can attain it, will express

an idea which is fully realized only in the final form of religion, while in the earlier stages it can be seen only obscurely, and in the lowest and earliest it might escape us altogether but for the light thrown back upon it by that which has arisen out of it. It will thus enable us to cast the light of the present upon the past, and to explain man's first uncertain efforts to name and to realise the divine, in the light of the clearer consciousness and more distinct utterance of a later age. It will permit us to trace back the religious life to its earliest and most elementary forms, and yet it will exempt us from the vain effort to extract from these forms an adequate idea either of the religious consciousness or of its object.

We may illustrate this way of looking at the subject by reference to a misconception which has greatly interfered with the impartial consideration of the development of religion. There is a common prejudice —a hope on the one side, a fear on the other—that, if the history of religion be brought under the idea of development, religion itself will be explained away by reducing it to its lowest terms. Such a hope and such a fear equally arise from an insufficient apprehension of the nature of development, and of the sense in which what goes before in development can be said to account for what follows. Causation, indeed, is a word of ambiguous meaning, and it might lead to misunderstanding if we were simply to assert that

"development is *not* causation"; for this might be taken to mean that there is only an arbitrary and external connexion between the successive stages in it. But, this misunderstanding being precluded, we may undoubtedly lay it down that the phenomena of the beginning of a life are not to be regarded as the *causes* of the phenomena that follow; but that the former are imperfect manifestations of a principle which is more completely manifested in the latter.[1] Beneath the most elementary phenomena of life there is a unity, which is not *exhausted* in them; a unity which grows by subordinating the environment to itself, and which, through all its stages, maintains its identity with itself, while it enlarges its sphere of manifestation. This unity, therefore, is the more clearly manifested the further we advance along the line of development. Hence we cannot from an examination of the first stage of a development pronounce any final judgment either for good or ill upon the later results of it.

To apply this to the case in point. It has been maintained on the one side, and disputed on the other, that religion develops out of a belief in ghosts, which is suggested by the remembered or imaginary forms that present themselves to us in dreams; and those

[1] From a slightly different point of view we might say that the explanation of facts of development by their causes is always of great value, but that it can never be a *final* explanation of them.

who have maintained, as well as those who have disputed this idea, have spoken as if the question of the value and truth of religion depended on its being proved or disproved. In other words, they have assumed that a tendency which manifests itself at first as a belief in ghosts, must necessarily remain to the last an illusory tendency, a tendency to give form and substance to what is really the baseless fabric of a vision. But those who say this might just as well maintain that the man is only a larger child, because the "child is father of the man"; or that science is merely a collection of fancies, because its first efforts produced nothing but vague hypothesis. Now, as we have already seen, it lies in the very nature of the case that the earliest form of that which lives and develops is the least adequate to its nature, and therefore that from which we can get the least distinct clue to the inner principle of that nature. Hence to trace a living being back to its beginning, and to explain what follows by such beginning would be simply to omit almost all that characterises it, and then to suppose that in what remains we have the secret of its existence. This is not really to explain it, but to explain it away; for, on this method, we necessarily reduce the features that distinguish it to a *minimum*, and, when we have done so, the remainder may well seem to be itself reducible to something in which the principle in question does not

manifest itself at all. If we carry the animal back to protoplasm, it may readily seem possible to explain it as a chemical compound. And, in like manner, by the same minimising process, we may seem to succeed in reducing consciousness and self-consciousness in its simplest form to sensation, and sensation in its simplest form to something not essentially different from the nutritive life of plants. The fallacy of the *sorites* may thus be used to conceal all *qualitative* changes under the guise of quantitative addition or diminution, and to bridge over all difference by the aid of the idea of gradual transition. For, as the old school of etymologists showed, if we are at liberty to interpose as many connecting links as we please, it becomes easy to imagine that things the most heterogeneous should spring out of each other. While, however, the hypothesis of gradual change—change proceeding by infinitesimal stages which melt into each other so that the eye cannot detect where one begins and the other ends—makes such a transition easier for *imagination*, it does nothing to diminish the difficulty or the wonder of it for *thought*. For the change which we call "development" is always *qualitative* as well as *quantitative*, and to treat it as merely quantitative is to omit the distinctive characteristic of the facts we have to explain.

We shall return to the analysis of the idea of development at a farther stage in our inquiry. For

the present enough has been said to show that in the definition of religion we have not to seek for something which is *common* to all religions, but rather for that which *underlies* them all as their principle. In other words, what we are looking for is that motive power, working in the human mind and essentially bound up with its structure, which manifests itself even in the sorcery and ghost-seeing of savages, which causes the gradual transition from such superstitions to better forms of worship, and which fully reveals its character only in the highest types of the religious life of Christianity. It need not, therefore, be a matter of wonder, if an examination of the facts of religious history, taken in relation to their psychological possibility, should lead us to a definition of religion which contains ideas quite beyond the reach of uncivilised men, and even to ideas that are not present to the consciousness of many who are in a high degree civilised. This, indeed, lies in the very nature of the case, and may be easily illustrated by many analogies. Thus, the structure of language contains implicitly in it a wealth of relations and distinctions of thought, which it requires the most subtle metaphysic to analyse. Yet all the thought which such metaphysic can discover is actually involved in the forms of grammar. It is not an external addition to the facts, but must in some way have been present in, if not to, the minds of those who created the language. Man is rational and self-

conscious long before he has made reason and self-consciousness the object of his reflexion; and therefore he is guided in the creation of language, as in the development of his social relations and of all the institutions of his life, by a rational principle, of which he is never *fully* conscious, and of which at first he is not conscious at all. And the same holds good of his religion. It is only at an advanced stage of reflexion that we begin to ask what religion is, and any answer to the question must involve conceptions which were altogether beyond the reach of those who were first moved by the religious sentiment. They did not know and could not know what "the spirit which was within them did signify," when it awed their souls into worship, or lifted them in passionate aspiration. It was impossible for them to analyse the idea that possessed them. A religion even partially conscious of itself could only be the result of a long process of development. It is therefore no valid objection to a definition of religion that it contains much that was not consciously present to mankind under many of the earlier religions, though it would be an objection to it if it did not furnish the means of explaining what *was* present to them,—explaining it, that is, as a stage in the development of the religious consciousness. A principle is far on the way to a complete realisation of itself when it has become self-conscious, yet it is only then that it

is able to explain the simplest facts of its own evolution.

With these preliminary explanations, we may now proceed with the attempt to define religion. We may begin by asserting that religion involves a relation, and, indeed, a conscious relation, to a being or beings whom we designate as divine. This, of course, is little more than a nominal definition of religion; for, prior to an explanation of the term God, it does not tell us anything, except that it is a relation of the conscious subject to some kind of object. Even to this definition, general as it is, objections might be taken. It might be said that, in some forms of savage superstition, there is no objective existence believed in, to which the name of God could properly be applied; and it might be pointed out that in Buddhism we have an instance of a religion which is purely subjective, and which finds its absolute principle only in the soul that turns away from the illusion of objective existence altogether.

But both these objections really rest on that false view of what is wanted in a definition, and especially in the definition of any being or thing that develops, which we have been considering. The phenomena of savage religion (assuming them to be primitive phenomena, a point which we are not here concerned to discuss) are explicable only as the

obscure beginnings of a religious consciousness that has not yet taken definite form; and the fact that in them a clear idea of God is still wanting only shows their immaturity. It would be as absurd to say that the idea of religion is to be confined to that which religion shows itself to be among savages, as to say that the idea of language is to be confined to that which is revealed in the speech of an infant. The principle of development makes such imperfect forms intelligible; for it teaches us to expect that in the first steps of the evolution of any form of consciousness, its expression will be indistinct and uncertain, and will least of all show what it really is.

The same answer, *mutatis mutandis*, may be made to the other objection to which I have referred. A true conception of development will enable us to understand the peculiarities of the Buddhist religion, and especially its denial of an objective God. For it will teach us to explain that denial as the result of the recoil of the soul of man, from the worship of God under a purely objective or external form, to the opposite extreme of subjectivity. Such a one-sided development of religious thought becomes intelligible, when we cease to regard it as an isolated fact, and when we take account of that alternation of movements, that swaying from side to side, which necessarily accompanies the advance of human thought from one stage to another. When we take the

separate religions as stages in a process, we cease to wonder at the excessive prominence of one factor of religion at one period, and of another at another. Religion may seem at one time to become altogether objective, the awe or fear of an external power which does with man what it will; and at another, it may seem to shrink up into a purely subjective experience, in which harmony with self takes the place of harmony with God. But such one-sided developments must always be regarded as stages in a movement, transitionary phases of consciousness, which we cannot estimate rightly except by considering at once that which they have developed from, and that which they are developing to. The preponderance of particular elements at particular times—and especially the alternating preponderance of the objective and the subjective elements—should not, therefore, hide from us the fact that the whole process turns upon the changing relations between two constant terms, God and man, each of which is conceived as essentially distinguished from, and essentially related to, the other,—God, as manifesting Himself *to* and *in* man, and man, as consciously seeking by acts of worship, by prayer or sacrifice or self-surrender, to establish or maintain harmonious relations between himself and his God or gods.

But is this all that we can say of the Being thought of as divine, or can we say anything more? Can we

say that God is to be thought of as a natural or as a spiritual Being; as a Being whose image is to be found in man himself, or in any of the animals or plants, or in the heavenly bodies, or the powers of nature? Or, on the other hand, are we to refrain with pious awe from likening Him to any of the finite things which He has created? Can we say, we might further ask, whether God is to be conceived as one or as many? In either case, can we say what is the character of the unity or the diversity of His Being? A merely external consideration of the different religions would naturally lead us to conclude that religion may exist in any one of these forms, and therefore that no one of them can be regarded as necessary to it. But the principle of evolution enables us to regard each of these forms as a stage in the development of the religious idea, a phase through which it has passed in some age and nation. Further, though there may be great difficulties in placing the different religions in any definite genetic relation to each other so as to exhibit a complete scheme of development; though, perhaps, it is an unattainable ideal to arrange all the forms of religion according to such a scheme, yet there can be little doubt or controversy as to the general direction in which the current of history has run. The most general view of the historical succession of religions is sufficient to show that the movement has been towards a conception of God as *one* and not as

many; as manifested *both* in nature and in spirit, but as reaching a higher and clearer manifestation in spirit than in nature; as, indeed, revealing in man's highest intellectual and moral life much that is hid or only imperfectly prefigured in nature. Thus far we might go without looking beyond the most obvious facts of history. Further, it would be acknowledged that, as the result of this historical process, the problem of religion has for us moderns taken a definite shape, both for those who accept and those who reject it. It would be acknowledged by almost every one that we are now shut up to the alternative, *either* that there is no God, and no revelation or knowledge of Him, *or* that the revelation of God must be sought in the whole process of nature and history, regarded as a development which finds its ultimate end and its culminating expression in the life of man as a spiritual being. This is the God whom alone it is now considered worth while either to assert or to deny. This is "our highest faith, our deepest doubt," the faith which is supported by the most powerful utterances of modern poetry and philosophy, the doubt on which all the scepticism and agnosticism of the age are concentrated.

Now, postponing in the meantime all attempt to trace out more definitely the course of development which has resulted in such a consciousness as this—in the consciousness that God, if there be a God, must be

conceived as a self-revealing Spirit, whose revelation reaches its culmination in the intellectual and moral life of man—postponing even the question whether this idea of God rests upon any sufficient evidence, let us simply ask what is implied in the very existence of the idea or consciousness in question. In other words, what are the conditions in the mind of man which make the rise of such a consciousness possible? What is it in the constitution of the human spirit that explains the origin and the growth of the belief in a Divine Being, and, ultimately, of *such* a Divine Being? The broad general fact that religion is a persistent element of man's consciousness, and further, that the religious idea has gone on developing till it has taken this form, and taken it in the minds both of those who assert and of those who deny the reality of its object, makes it necessary to ask for its psychological causes. We may regard it, if we please, as an illusion; but it is at least no superficial phenomenon of belief, no chance product of phantasy. It is a principle which has grown with man's growth and strengthened with his strength, and which has shown itself to be bound up in some way with his inmost consciousness of himself. We need not deny, at least in the first instance, that there may be a point in his development at which man will throw off religion; but, if religion ever becomes extinct, it can only be because it has served its purpose and has given rise to some more comprehensive form of

life. And even the final recognition of the unreality of the object or objects of religion would not release us from the necessity of explaining it, of tracing it back to its root in man's nature, and of determining its relation to other elements in his consciousness. And, indeed, it is only in this way that we can finally ascertain its value—its truth, if it contain any truth, or its falsity, if it be nothing but an illusion. For as, on the one hand, we are never sure of a truth till we see the evidencing principle which connects it with our intelligence, so we can never finally rid ourselves of an error till we have found out the secret of its power over us, the semblance of truth whereby it deceived us. Just as Kant sought to determine the value and limits of our knowledge of the immediate world of experience, by asking what makes that knowledge possible, so we must ask what makes possible our religious consciousness, our real or supposed knowledge of a Divine Being. It is only in this way that we can discover whether it is real or not, and, if real, what kind and extent of reality it has. We have to ask, in other words, what is the ground in our rational nature of a consciousness which grows, as the religious consciousness has actually grown, and which finally takes the form which it has now actually taken, in order that we may once for all determine the extent and nature of its validity.

LECTURE THIRD.

THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION.

General Result of the Historical Evolution of Religion—The Question of its Possibility—The Three Ideas that define our Consciousness—Place of the Idea of God in relation to the Ideas of Self and Not-Self—That Religion does not imply Reflective Consciousness of the Idea of God—Sense in which the Ordinary Consciousness implies this Idea—Consistency of this with the existence of degraded Types of Religion—The Distinction between what is in, *and what is* for *Consciousness, and its Bearing on the Idea of Development—Religious Reverence, as rising above Slavish Fear of the Object, and Presumptuous Self-assertion of the Subject—Religion as a Principle of Unity in Life.*

In the last lecture we were seeking for some general idea or definition which might be a guide to us in our subsequent inquiries. I endeavoured to show that the idea we want is not to be found in any element common to all religions. For, even if such an element could be detected, it would be too general to supply us with a clue to the facts of religious history. A definition so obtained would correspond, if to any, only to the lowest and most primitive form of religious life; it would not be a prin-

ciple adequate to the explanation of the endless multiplicity of forms which religion takes in different ages and nations, or of the way in which they successively arise out of each other. Rather, in conformity with the idea of evolution, the definition of religion must be derived from a consideration of the whole course of its history, viewed as a process of transition from the lowest to the highest form of it. In fact, if the different religions are to be regarded as successive stages in a development, what we have in that history is just religion progressively *defining itself*, and the idea of religion will be most clearly expressed in the most mature form which it has reached as the result of the whole process. Reflexion, therefore, will have to read that history backwards, and to view what is earliest in the light of ideas derived from a consideration of what is latest; somewhat as we search among the sparse records of the boyhood of a great man for the indications of a greatness which none of his contemporaries saw, or could possibly have seen.

Now the most general and superficial view of history is sufficient to show that, while all religion involves a conscious relation to a being called God, this Divine Being is in different religions conceived in the most different ways; as one and as many, as natural and as spiritual, as like to, and manifested in, almost every object in the heavens above or earth

beneath, in mountains and trees, in animals and men; or, on the contrary, as incapable of being represented by any finite image whatsoever; and, again, as the God of a family, of a nation, or of humanity. But, further, when we regard the history of religion as a process of evolution, we do not need to go beyond the most general facts to discover that, in the development of the idea of God, there is a certain trend or direction of progress from multiplicity to unity, from the natural to the spiritual, from the particular to the universal. We are, therefore, able to say that *now*, as the result of the long process, the only God whom it is possible to worship is one who manifests Himself both in nature and in spirit, but more clearly in spirit than in nature, and most clearly of all in the highest developments of the intellectual and moral life of man. Farther, we can say that all ideas of a family or national god have disappeared from the minds of civilised men, or that they exist only as survivals from an earlier stage of human culture. It is universally acknowledged that, if there be a God, he can be no 'respecter of persons,' but must be a 'God of the whole earth,' manifested in and to the spirit of man in all times and places alike. Sentiment and aesthetic feeling may at times make us throw ourselves back into the spirit of an earlier faith, and wish, like Wordsworth, that we could

"Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

But we cannot really worship such divinities. The only Deity we can believe in, nay, we might say, the only Deity we can disbelieve in, or seriously deny is a universal God, a spiritual principle manifested in all nature and history.

Now, regarding the historical development of religion as a whole, up to its culmination in a universal religion, we may reasonably ask how we are to explain its possibility. An element of human life which has had such a history, whose influence has been steadily widening and deepening with the general advance of civilisation through age after age, must be closely, if not indissolubly, bound up with the nature of man. And it must be so, whether ultimately we are to regard it as a fundamental truth or a fundamental error. It may be an illusion, but it is not at least a superficial illusion, produced by the accidental circumstances of our environment, or, as was at one time supposed, by the intrigues of interested impostors. It is a belief which, whether true or false, has a psychological necessity as an important phase in the development of the human spirit, a belief which has a deep root in the spirit of man, even if it is not a permanent element of his life. And the only way to find a rational criterion, by which we may ascertain the

nature and extent of its validity, and determine the truth or falsity of its claims, is by asking ourselves what that root is.

What, then, I ask, is the root or basis of religion in the nature of our intelligence? Why is not man content with the experience of the finite, and why does he seek after an infinite Being, if haply he may find Him? Can it be said that the idea of God is bound up with the other elements of our general consciousness of the world and of ourselves? And if so, what place does it hold in relation to the other elements of that consciousness?

I answer that, when we consider the general nature of our conscious life—our life as rational beings endowed with the powers of thinking and willing—we find that it is defined and, so to speak, circumscribed *by three ideas*, which are closely, and even indissolubly, connected with each other.

These are the idea of the object or not-self, the idea of the subject or self, and the idea of the unity which is presupposed in the difference of the self and the not-self, and within which they act and react on each other: in other words, the idea of God. Let me explain these terms more fully. The *object* is the general name under which we include the external world and all the things and beings in it, all that we know and all that we act on, the whole environment, which conditions the activity of the ego

and furnishes the means and the sphere in which it realises itself. All this we call object, in order to indicate its distinction from and its relation to the subject for which it exists. We call it by this name also to indicate that we are obliged to think of it as *one* whole, *one* world, all of whose parts are embraced in *one* connexion of space and all whose changes take place in *one* connexion of time. All these parts and changes, therefore, form elements in one system, and modern science teaches us to regard them all as connected together by links of causation. There is only one thing which stands over against this complex whole of existence, and refuses to be regarded *simply* as a part of the system; and that is the ego, the self, the *subject* for which it exists. For the primary condition of the existence of this subject is that it should distinguish itself from the object as such—from each object, and from the whole system of objects. Hence, strictly speaking, there is but one object and one subject for each of us; for, in opposition to the subject, the totality of objects constitute one world, and in opposition to the object all the experiences of the subject, all its thought and action, are merged in the unity of one self. All our life, then, moves between these two terms which are essentially distinct from, and even opposed to, each other. Yet, though thus set in an antagonism which can never cease, because with its ceasing the whole nature of

both would be subverted, they are also essentially related, nor could either of them be conceived to exist without the other. The consciousness of the one, we might even say, is inseparably the consciousness of its relation to the other. We know the *object* only as we bring it back to the unity of the self; we know the *subject* only as we realise it in the object.

But, lastly, these two ideas, between which our whole life of thought and action is contained, and from one to the other of which it is continually moving, point back to a third idea which embraces them both, and which in turn constitutes their limit and ultimate condition. For where we have two terms, which are thus at once essentially distinguished and essentially related, which we are obliged to *contrast and oppose* to each other, seeing that they have neither of them any meaning except as opposite counterparts of each other, and which we are equally obliged to *unite*, seeing that the whole content of each is just its movement towards the other, we are necessarily driven to think of these two terms as the manifestation or realisation of a third term, which is higher than either. Recognising that the object only exists in distinction from, and relation to, the subject, we find it impossible to reduce the subject to a *mere* object among other objects. Recognising that the subject exists only as it returns upon itself from or

realises itself in the object, we find it impossible to reduce the object to a *mere* phase in the life of the subject. But, recognising them as indivisible yet necessarily opposed, as incapable of identification yet necessarily related, we are forced to seek the secret of their being in a higher principle, of whose unity they in their action and reaction are the manifestation, which they presuppose as their beginning and to which they point as their end. How otherwise can we do justice at once to their distinction and their relation, to their independence and their essential connexion with each other? The two, subject and object, are the extreme terms in the difference which is essential to our rational life. Each of them presupposes the other, and therefore neither can be regarded as producing the other. Hence, we are compelled to think of them both as rooted in a still higher principle, which is at once the source of their relatively independent existence and the all-embracing unity that limits their independence. This principle, therefore, may be imaged as a crystal sphere that holds them together, and which, through its very transparency, is apt to escape our notice, yet which must always be there as the condition and limit of their operation. To put it more directly, the idea of an absolute unity, which transcends all the oppositions of finitude, and especially the last opposition which includes all others—the opposition of subject and object—*is the ultimate pre-*

supposition of our consciousness. Hence we cannot understand the real character of our rational life or appreciate the full compass of its movement, unless we recognise as its necessary constituents or guiding ideas, not only the ideas of object and subject, but also the idea of God. The idea of God, therefore—meaning by that, in the first instance, only the idea of an absolute principle of unity which binds in one "all thinking things, all objects of all thought," which is at once the source of being to all things that are, and of knowing to all beings that know—is an essential principle, or rather the ultimate essential principle of our intelligence, a principle which must manifest itself in the life of every rational creature. Every creature, who is capable of the consciousness of an objective world and of the consciousness of a self, is capable also of the consciousness of God. Or, to sum up the whole matter in one word, every rational being as such is a religious being.[1]

While we say this, however, we must at once guard against a misunderstanding which is very apt to arise. If all men are religious, and if religion involves the idea of an absolute principle of unity in our lives, it

[1] The above, of course, is only a very abstract statement of an idea which requires much illustration and explanation. It was necessary, however, to make it at once, in order to indicate the point of view from which the subject is to be treated. This and several of the following lectures will be devoted to the further exposition of it.

might seem to follow that the belief in such a principle must be found in connexion with every form of religion. But, as a matter of fact, this is far from being the case. Indeed, it would be hard to discover in any pre-Christian religion a thought that fully answers to the account of religion just given Yet, in development, the earliest stages always point for their explanation and completion to the later stage; and the germ of the idea of God as the ultimate unity of being and knowing, subject and object, must in some way be present in every rational consciousness. For such a consciousness necessarily involves the idea of the self and the not-self, the ego and the world, as distinct yet in relation, *i.e.* as opposed within a unity. The clear reflective consciousness of the object without, of the subject within, and of God as the absolute reality which is beyond and beneath both—as one complete rational consciousness in which each of these terms is clearly distinguished and definitely related to the others—is, in the nature of the case, a late acquisition of man's spirit, one that can come to him only as the result of a long process of development. But the three elements are there in the mind of the simplest human being who opens his eyes upon the world, who distinguishes himself from it yet relates himself to it. And the difficulty and perplexity which is occasioned by the unity and the difference of these

elements is the moving principle of development from the very dawn of intelligence.

Let it not, therefore, be thought that we are supposing primitive man to possess developed philosophical ideas of the relations of the self and the not-self. We can no more expect him to attain to such ideas than we can expect him to analyse grammatically or logically any sentence which he utters. We assume that he is conscious of an external world, but not that he knows anything of the conditions under which knowledge of that world is possible,—anything of the nature of an object as such, or of the relations of objects in general. We assume that he is conscious of a self, but not that he has ever considered what is meant by a self, or that he has distinguished between the self—as the centre of unity in all his thinking and feeling and willing—and the particular thoughts and feelings and acts which he refers to it. Finally, we assume that he *does* relate self and not-self to each other, and that, therefore, in some way he rises in thought above his own individual existence and the individual existence of the objects he knows; we assume, in other words, that, as a rational being, he is not limited to a purely objective consciousness of things, nor imprisoned in a subjective consciousness of his own ideas, but that he takes up a point of view above this opposition. And this necessity of his

rational nature, the necessity which places him at a universal point of view, cannot but modify his consciousness both of the object and of himself; it cannot but lead him in some way to raise his thoughts from the world and from himself to that which is beyond both, or to see in them something which is greater than their immediate existence as finite things. But this does not mean that the savage or the child is able to analyse the idea of God or to give any intelligible account of the infinite and the universal, of that something, higher than the immediate objects of his consciousness, which so persistently haunts him and disturbs his life 'with thoughts beyond the reaches of his soul.' In fact, we only assume that he is a self-conscious being, and that, as such, he cannot but oppose himself to objects and relate himself to them; for this already involves that these three elements are present, if not *to*, yet *in* his consciousness, stimulating it to development, and therefore to the differentiation and integration of the confused unity of sense. But this, as will be shown more fully in the sequel, is quite consistent with the fullest recognition of the crudeness, the materialism, the almost brutal sensuousness and coarseness, of the ideas of uncivilised man, who has never distinctly realised, nay, who scarce can be said to have realised at all, the existence of anything that is not given in the particular impressions of sense. Whether

realised or not, the universal principle is there, ruling over man's consciousness of the particular. But at this early stage he cannot make it an object of reflexion. It cannot, therefore, present itself to him *as* a universal principle, but only in the guise of a particular and finite object; and his consciousness, if he has any consciousness of it, must be in the utmost degree incoherent and confused. Man is always man; but in this stage he is least of all conscious what it is to be a man; and, in spite of the immense formal difference which separates him from a pure animal or sensitive being, from beings who are not self-conscious, the difference of the content of his thought and feeling from theirs seems almost infinitesimal. Nay, we might even say that, in a moral point of view, it is a difference for the worse. God has given him a glimpse of heaven's light, and, as Mephistopheles says in the *Faust*,

> "Er braucht's allein
> Nur thierischer als jedes Thier zu seyn."

"He makes use of it only to be more brutal than any brute." He distinguishes himself from the animals mainly by the fact that he has lost the simplicity, the innocence, the contentment with the present, which characterises the animal. The balance of sense has been disturbed or destroyed in him, but the balance of spirit has not been attained. He is the most greedy and fierce and sensual of beasts,

because he cannot fully satisfy himself with the diet of the beast, and has as yet acquired no idea of any other diet. And his religion, therefore, seems, in our first view of it, to contain little more than a terror of something more powerful than himself, the haunting consciousness of his weakness before the mighty forces of the universe, and the dream that, by some incantation or propitiation, he may bring them to his side. On a closer view, however, when we regard the growth of savage superstition not merely in itself, but in the light of that which springs out of it, we begin to see that under the unsightliness and horror of his superstition, there is germinating a consciousness of that which is greater than himself and greater than any object, and yet which is so close to him that he cannot neglect or evade it. We cannot, indeed, say in this case that *corruptio optimi pessima;* for what we have here is not corruption and decay, but rather the error and defect of imperfect development: not the babblings of senility but the lispings of infancy. But we *can* say that it is what is best in him—his highest consciousness and that which is most distinctive of him as a man—which is troubling and perplexing him. It is 'heaven's light that is leading him astray.' And his wanderings, terrible as they sometimes are, give proof, nevertheless, of something far higher than the dull complacency and innocence of animal life: they

are the indication of a nature that cannot be satisfied with the finite.

It may be desirable to illustrate this idea a little farther, as it is the key to what is perhaps the greatest difficulty connected with the application of the idea of development to the life of man, and particularly to his religious life. It is hard to analyse the religious consciousness, and to express all the elements it contains, without seeming to attribute to it universally elements which are found only in its highest forms. This difficulty we can meet only by making a clear distinction between that which religion contains or involves—that which it is to one who is able to reflect upon its nature and thoroughly to analyse it—and that which it is to the subject of it, that which the religious man consciously realises. The distinction is one which affects every department of man's rational life, and it cannot be neglected by any one who would seek to understand him as a being who not only exists but develops. Though man is essentially self-conscious, he always *is* more than he *thinks* or *knows*; and his thinking and knowing are ruled by ideas of which he is at first unaware, but which, nevertheless, affect everything he says or does. Of these ideas we may, therefore, expect to find some indication even in the earliest stage of his development; but we cannot expect that in that

stage they will appear in their proper form or be known for what they really are. We often speak, indeed, in a general and indiscriminating way, as if the undeveloped mind had no contents except that of which it is clearly conscious. In this spirit Wordsworth declares of a rude and uncultivated nature that

> "A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."

But, if we take this literally, it contains an impossibility. Peter Bell could not see the primrose with the eyes of a poet; it could not awaken in him all the suggestions of virgin beauty and early decay which made Shakspere's Perdita speak of

> "pale primroses
> That die unmarried ere they can behold
> Bright Phoebus in his strength";

but as little could he gaze upon it with the dull uncomprehending gaze of the animal, whose sense is for the moment filled by it to the exclusion of everything else. In recognising it as a primrose—by whatever marks or characteristics he does so recognise it—he has given it a definite place in his world, a place determined by its relations to other things and to himself. If he has not observed any of the analogies and relations which make the little

flower so eloquent to the poet, he has at least laid the basis and prepared the way for them, by giving to it a local habitation and a name in the intelligible world. In like manner, it might seem not unjust to say that the religion of primitive man is nothing but a degrading fear of some superior power, and that the idea which we have introduced into our definition of religion, the idea of an ultimate unity which underlies and embraces "all thinking things, all objects of all thought," is entirely beyond his reach. It *is* beyond his reach in the sense that he never can comprehend it, nor even set it as a distinct object before his thought or imagination. But as, after all, he is a self-conscious being, he cannot but distinguish himself from and relate himself to the objective world; and it is impossible that the suspicion, the *Ahnung*, the dim anticipative consciousness, of an all-encompassing power, which is beyond both object and subject yet manifested in both, should not sometimes visit him. And to one who views his obscure superstitions—his dread and horror of supernatural powers which are near him but which he cannot measure—in the light of a true idea of the relations of self-consciousness to the consciousness of God, they will seem already to contain the germ of those higher forms of belief which gradually arise out of them.

What I have said may be thus summed up

Man, by the very constitution of his mind, has three ways of thinking open to him. He can look *outwards*, upon the world around him; he can look *inwards*, upon the self within him; and he can look *upwards*, to the God above him, to the Being who unites the outward and the inward worlds and who manifests Himself in both. None of these possibilities can remain entirely unrealised. Even in the earliest stages of his existence he cannot but be conscious of the outward world: it is the first and most natural effort of his mind to throw itself into the external objects which exercise all his senses, and offer immediate satisfaction to his appetites. By a natural necessity he thus, as it were, lives out of doors and becomes a citizen of the world, long before he learns to dwell at home with himself and to know himself as having an inner life of his own. Yet, though this is true, it is certain that the most unreflecting man *has* an inner, as well as an outer, side to his mental existence. He is essentially self-conscious; and this self-consciousness, however little he may reflect on it, inevitably separates him from the things and beings he knows, even *while* he knows them. The pains and pleasures of his sensuous existence, not to mention anything higher, must inevitably send him back upon himself, and make him partly conscious of his isolation from other objects and beings.

And with this growth of self-consciousness comes, on the one hand, a painful sense of dependence on what is not himself, and, on the other hand, a desire to aggrandise himself, and make the outer world subservient to his satisfaction, a desire not merely to appropriate this or that object, but even to appropriate the whole universe to himself. Every self, once awakened, is naturally a despot, and "bears, like the Turk, no brother near the throne." The inner world is as great as the outer, and everyone, as even Hobbes in spite of his Sensationalism recognised, has an 'infinite desire for gain or glory'; has, in other words, a desire that grows with what it feeds on, till it can be satisfied with nothing less than a whole universe for itself. The humorous and eloquent words in which Carlyle expressed this idea are very well known, but perhaps I may be allowed to quote them once more:—

"Will the whole finance-ministers and upholsterers and confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in jointstock company, to make one shoeblack *happy?* They cannot accomplish it above an hour or two; for the shoeblack also has a soul, quite other than his stomach, and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: *God's infinite universe altogether to himself*, therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose. . . .

Try him with half a universe, half of an omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half, and declares himself the most maltreated of men. Always there is a black spot in our sunshine; it is even, as I said, the *shadow of ourselves.*"[1]

But is this all? Are we thus shut in between an outward world which limits us on every side, and a self that we can never satisfy, and which forces us into an internecine struggle with all other beings for existence and for satisfaction. To this we can only answer by referring to the *third* element of our consciousness—

> "Unless above himself he can
> Exalt himself, how mean a thing is man."

There is necessarily present in us, in virtue of the very fact that our inner and our outer lives stand in constant relation to each other, the consciousness of a Being or Principle which is above both, and revealed in both. And the idea of this Principle or Being, just so far as we can realise it, or, in other words, make real to ourselves the thought of it, lifts us at once above the mere feeling of dependence upon that which is without us, and equally above the feeling of lawless independence, and the limitless greed of appetite, which would make us claim everything for ourselves. A human consciousness cannot

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Book II. Ch. ix.

exist without some dawning of *reverence*—of an awe and aspiration which is as different from fear as it is from presumption, from slavish submission as it is from tyrannical self-assertion. And it is this reverence, this sense of a subjection which elevates us, of an obedience that makes us free, this consciousness of a Power which curbs and humiliates us, but at the same time draws us up to itself, which is the essence of religion, and the source of all man's higher life.

Now, as I have already said, it is not always easy to detect the germs or imperfect forms of such a consciousness in *all* the forms of religion which have appeared in different ages and nations. Nor, indeed, would it be possible in many cases for us to detect them at all, if it were not for the light thrown back upon them by the later development of religion which has come out of them. Amid the sensualities of nature-worship, the horrible sacrifices offered to gods who seem to us the very embodiments of cruelty, revenge, and injustice, and the indescribable follies of spirit-scaring and witchcraft which we find even in many nations not altogether uncivilised, where, it may be asked, can we find the traces of that reverent awe and aspiration which we have been describing, and which are the natural feelings of man towards God, if God be really the Being, the consciousness of whom is to give unity

to our divided and finite existence, and to lift us above its division and finitude?

A full answer to this objection it is impossible here to give. I can only refer by anticipation to one point which may be verified by the most superficial knowledge of the history of religion. Religions may differ very widely, they may be comparatively elevated or they may be what we would call degraded; but they have this as their common characteristic (at least when they rise above the vaguest superstition), that they give a kind of unity to life. And they do this mainly by at once allying man with nature, and joining him with his fellows in some more or less comprehensive society. They round off the world, so far as it affects him, into a whole which is referred to one principle, a principle which is manifested at once within the man and without him, and which binds him in some way both to nature and to his fellowmen. Hence I said in the first lecture that a man's religion, if it is sincere, is that consciousness in which he takes up a definite attitude to the world, and gathers to a focus all the meaning of his life. Of course, the man's world may be, and in earlier times is, a comparatively narrow one. He is unable to look beyond the nation, the clan, or, it may be, the family to which he belongs; nor can he at this stage form any conception of nature in general, but only of special powers of nature, which he regards as in some way

friendly to him. And so long as this is so, the unity given to his life by religion can only be partial and superficial. His heaven may still admit a multiplicity of gods, who are only imperfectly harmonised or united with each other. Yet so far as it goes, his religion gives him a sense of alliance with nature and man under the protection of a divine power who is above both, and in both.

Now this is just what we should expect, if religion be always the more or less developed consciousness of that infinite unity, which is beyond all the divisions of the finite, particularly the division of subject and object. We may add, finally, that so far as religion does this, it is, in spite of much error and even immorality, a step towards that consciousness of rest beyond the agitations of finite care, of unity beyond the differences of finite life, of eternal reality beyond the show of a passing world, which Hegel expresses so vividly in the introduction to his philosophy of religion. "All nations know that it is the religious consciousness in which they possess the truth; and they have therefore regarded their religion as that which gives dignity and peace to their lives. All that awakes doubt and perplexity, all sorrow and care, all limited interests of finitude, we leave behind us on the 'bank and shoal of time.' And, as on the summit of a mountain, removed from all hard distinctness of detail, we calmly overlook the limitations of

the landscape and the world, so by religion we are lifted above all the obstructions of finitude. In religion, therefore, man beholds his own existence in a transfigured reflexion, in which all the divisions, all the crude lights and shadows of the world, are softened into eternal peace under the beams of a spiritual sun. It is in this native land of the spirit that the waters of oblivion flow, from which it is given to Psyche to drink and forget all her sorrows; for here the darkness of life becomes a transparent dream-image, through which the light of eternity shines in upon us."

LECTURE FOURTH.

THE IDEA OF THE INFINITE AS DEFINED BY PROFESSOR MAX MÜLLER AND MR. HERBERT SPENCER.

Essential Unity of the Religious Idea in different Stages of its Development—Statement of the views of Professor Max Müller and Mr. Herbert Spencer—Three Possible Conceptions of the Infinite—Criticism of the Conception of the Infinite as a 'Beyond,' or Negative of the Finite—Criticism of the Conception of the Infinite as the Positive Basis and Presupposition of the Finite—Relation of Mr. Spencer's view to that of Spinoza—That the Infinite, as Presupposition and Principle of the Finite, cannot be unknowable.

In the last lecture I attempted to give a general idea of religion, and at the same time to meet one or two obvious objections which naturally present themselves, when we attempt to verify such an idea by the actual history of religion. I maintained that the consciousness of God, or at least the principle out of which the consciousness of God arises, is as truly one of the primary elements of our intelligence as the consciousness of the object or the consciousness of the self. Thus all our knowledge of the

objective world and all our knowledge of ourselves, presupposes the idea of God; though it is equally true that, just because it is the presupposition of all other knowledge, it is the last thing on which we reflect, or which we try to explain to ourselves. This becomes manifest if we consider that our whole life, theoretical and practical, turns on the opposition and relation between objects without and the self within us. To reproduce in our minds the order and system of the objective world, and to realise in the objective world the ends determined for us by our nature as self-conscious beings, is the sum and substance of our earthly existence. But both these movements presuppose an ultimate unity, which reveals itself both in the self and the not-self, and in all the intercourse that goes on between them. Thus, beneath and beyond what we may call our *secular* consciousness in all its forms, beneath and beyond all our consciousness of finite objects and of the subjective interests and desires that bind us to them, there is always a *religious* consciousness, the consciousness of an infinite or Divine Being who is the source of all existence and of all knowledge, and in whom we and all things "live and move and have our being."

Religion, on this view of it, arises in man because his consciousness of himself in distinction from, and relation to the world without him always implies that he transcends both, and that he looks down

upon both—upon himself as well as upon that which is not himself—from the point of view of an all-embracing unity. Thus we are not confined to any object of perception that is before us, but are *able* to raise our thoughts above it, and to put it in its proper relation to other objects that are not immediately present to us. Nay, to a certain extent we are *obliged*, as rational beings, to do this. We cannot gaze like a dumb animal at the object of sense, as if there were nothing in the world beyond it. Inevitably, in a moment, our imagination or our reason carries us beyond it, and almost without our being aware of any movement of our thought, we have formed some conception of it, which binds it to other things and makes it a link in the general connexion of experience. And it is the same with our own inner life. The feeling of the moment can be nothing to us apart from its relation to the past and the future: we cannot be conscious of it without being carried beyond it, and regarding it as a stage in a continuous life. Nay, we are obliged to view our own lives as parts of a wider and more comprehensive life. We cannot fix our minds upon ourselves as individuals without regarding ourselves as constituents of a greater whole—as members in a society and parts of the system of the world. In apprehending ourselves, we can, nay, to a certain extent we must, rise above ourselves, and treat our own individual

existence as if it were no more to us than that of any other being to whom we are brought into relation. To do this thoroughly and systematically, indeed,—in *knowledge*, to get rid of subjective views and to look at all particular objects from the point of view of the whole, and in *practice*, to devote ourselves to the good of that whole, to make ourselves the instruments of the great organism of which we are members—would be to attain the highest intellectual and moral ideal we can conceive. But the capacity for such universal life is the birth-right of every rational being; and every one who has shown himself a rational being has begun to realise it. It is the strange paradox of the spiritual life, that to be a self is at once to be one finite individual among other finite individuals and things, and to reach beyond the individuality not only of all other things and beings but even of ourselves; for we can neither know nor act without thus transcending ourselves. But thus to go beyond our own individuality and all mere individuality is already to apprehend in some way that which is universal and divine. Hence, in all his secular consciousness of other objects and of himself, man is necessarily haunted by the idea of something which is beyond them, yet in them—something in opposition to which they are as nothing, in unity with which they are more than they immediately seem to be.

Now the main difficulty in realising the truth of this view is the same which meets us in all applications of the idea of development. It is hard to trace in the earlier forms of religion anything that corresponds to the idea which we maintain to be the spring of that development, the idea of an all-embracing power which is at once beyond all objects and all subjects, which through all divisions of the finite world "spreads undivided, operates unspent," which remains as the permanent basis of man's life, unchanged through all his conflict with nature, with his fellowmen, and with himself, and which is ever bringing the struggle and tumult of his finite existence back into peace again. And it will be no small part of our work in the sequel to trace out the various forms in which this idea disguises itself from us in different religions. Here, I can only refer by anticipation to the fact that religion, wherever it shows itself in any definite form, gives harmony and direction to man's life in two ways—(1) it delivers him from himself and the difficulties of his immediate life by reverence for that which is above him; and (2) it teaches him to regard that power which he thus reverences as manifested both in nature and in the society to which he as an individual belongs. Wherever we find these two things in a religion, we may safely assert that, in spite of the dark superstitions and immoral practices

with which it may be united, it brings unity to the life of man. And we are prepared to recognise it as a step towards that consciousness of a divine unity beneath all the divisions of finitude of which we have been speaking, or, in other words, as a step in the development of that religious consciousness of which even the highest religion is an imperfect expression.

The idea of religion we have thus reached may be rendered more clearly intelligible, if we compare it with certain other views of religion, which have been taken by distinguished modern writers. Professor Max Müller has maintained that the principle of religion lies in the *consciousness of the infinite.* This consciousness is, he asserts, the opposite counterpart to the consciousness of the finite as such, for "limitation and finitude in whatever sense we use them, always implies a something *beyond.* . . . Beyond every limit, we must always take it for granted that there is something else. But what is the reason of this? The reason why we cannot *conceive* an absolute limit is because we never *perceive* an absolute limit; or, in other words, because, in perceiving the finite, we always perceive the infinite also." "If we perceive a square, the only way we can perceive it is by perceiving the space beyond the square. If we perceive the horizon, we perceive at the same time that which hems in our

senses from going beyond the horizon. There is no limit which has not two sides, one turned towards us, the other turned towards that which is beyond: and it is this *Beyond*, which from the earliest days has formed the only *real* foundation for all that we call transcendental in our perceptual as well as in our conceptual knowledge, though it has no doubt been peopled with the manifold creations of the poetic imagination." Professor Max Müller goes on to refer to the infinite of time and the infinite series of causation as other illustrations of the same principle, the principle that any limit we take is always in relation to a yet undetermined 'Beyond.' And when it is objected to this view of religion that the idea of the infinite is an abstraction to which primitive man is not capable of rising, Professor Max Müller answers that in saying that this is the *fundamental* idea in religion, he does not mean that the religious consciousness has in all ages and nations carried with it the *explicit* idea of the infinite, as such, *i.e.* the idea of the infinite as he defines it; but merely that the idea of God has in all times tended to attach itself to objects which cannot be completely grasped in sensuous perception or imagination, to objects which, as it were, strain our apprehensive faculty whenever we try to gather them into the unity of one idea. Hence he declares, with doubtful accuracy, that there

are things too limited and too easily apprehended for men to make gods of them. "A stone is not infinite, nor a shell, nor a dog, and hence they have no '*theogonic capacity.*' But a river or a mountain, and still more the sky or the dawn, possess theogonic capacity, because they have in themselves from the beginning something going beyond the limits of sensuous perception, something which, for want of a better word, I must continue to call infinite."[1]

[1] *Natural Religion*, p. 122 *seq.* It would be easy to attack the instances here given, and to show that men have worshipped every one of the objects to which Professor Max Müller denies all 'theogonic capacity.' And it might farther be maintained that the worship of dogs and other animals may show a deeper consciousness of the infinite than that which finds the manifestation of it in a mere physical vastness that reaches beyond the immediate grasp of sense.

But there is a still more vital objection. Professor Max Müller here allows that the consciousness of the infinite is not *explicit* in the earliest religions; and in doing so, he altogether destroys the claim of his own definition. For, if we have a right to consider what is *implicit*, *i.e.* that which exists in germ in the lowest religion and is developed or made fully explicit only in the highest, we cannot stop at such an idea of the infinite as Professor Max Müller gives us, the idea of a mere 'Beyond,' or negative of any given limit. For this idea, as will immediately be shown, corresponds to a stage in the history of religion which is neither the first nor the last, a stage at which the religious consciousness has become reflective, but in which reflexion has not yet done its perfect work. And there can be no reason for deriving the definition of religion from such a transition

Looking at these statements and illustrations, Professor Max Müller would seem to mean that we can become conscious of things only as we limit them, and that we cannot limit them without going beyond the limit. All things determined as in space and time, are determined as against a 'Beyond.' All definition is in relation to a wider undefined. And it is just in this relation that we must find the secret cause of worship or religious reverence, the object of such reverence being always either the infinite, the 'Beyond' in general, or at least some object which, because it seems to the worshipper to transcend all his measurement, is for him identified with the infinite.

Now before criticising this view, I would like to compare it with another view which, though not identical, is closely akin to it—the view of Mr. Spencer. Mr. Spencer also asserts that the proper object of religion is the infinite or unconditioned. And he maintains farther that this infinite or unconditioned, though in itself unknown and even unknowable, is yet involved or presupposed in all that we

stage in its development. On the other hand, if we are bound to base our definition on that which is common to all religions, and which therefore exists *explicitly* even in the earliest or lowest forms of religion, we should be reduced, as Professor Max Müller allows, to something lower than *his* or *any* idea of the infinite. Professor Max Müller's definition thus gives us *neither* what is involved in the idea of religion *nor* what is common to all religions.

know. All definite thought, all distinct determination of objects, is within the circle of an unconditioned reality, which cannot be directly perceived or thought by us, except as the presupposition of all other perception or thought. Mr. Spencer's first principles, therefore, begin with a theory of the Infinite or Absolute, which, according to him, is the true object of religion. Of this Infinite or Absolute he attempts to prove at once that it is unknowable, and yet that we have a kind of consciousness of it which precludes all reasonable doubt of its reality. It is *unknowable;* for, as Mr. Spencer repeats after Mansel, to know is to distinguish and to relate, and therefore the object of knowledge can never be that which is unlimited and unrelated. Yet we are forced to *believe* in it, because a *limit* always implies a distinction of parts within a whole which is itself unlimited; and a *relation* is a connexion of factors, both of which belong to a totality which is itself unrelated. He therefore rejects the view of Mansel that the Infinite and Absolute cannot be present to us in consciousness at all. "The error," says Mr. Spencer, "(very naturally fallen into by philosophers intent on demonstrating the limits and conditions of consciousness), consists in assuming that consciousness has *nothing but* limits and conditions, to the entire neglect of that which is limited and conditioned. It is forgotten that there is something which alike forms the raw material of definite thought,

and remains after the definiteness which thought gives it has been destroyed. We are conscious of the relative as existing under conditions and limits; it is impossible that these conditions can be thought of apart from that something to which they give the form: the abstraction of these limits and conditions is by hypothesis the abstraction of them *only;* consequently, there must be a residuary consciousness of something which filled up these outlines, and this indefinite something constitutes our consciousness of the non-relative and absolute." Or again: "Our notion of the limited is composed, firstly, of a consciousness of some kind of *being;* and, secondly, of a consciousness of the *limits* under which it is known. In the antithetical notion of the unlimited, the consciousness of limits is abolished, but not the consciousness of some kind of being. It is quite true that in the absence of conceived limits this consciousness ceases to be a conception properly so called"—in other words, it ceases to be knowledge in the full sense of the term—"but it is none the less true that it remains a mode of consciousness."[1] Hence Mr. Spencer denies that the idea of the absolute and infinite and unconditioned is negative, and maintains that, on the contrary, it is the positive basis of all our consciousness of the relative, the finite, and the conditioned. It is, so to speak, the blank background on which we draw lines of division, or from which we cut

[1] *First Principles*, p. 90 *seq.*

off parts, when we try to determine the finite; it is the empty space in which we describe our figures. In this consciousness of an unknowable reality, which is out of all limits and conditions, and which accompanies and underlies all our other consciousness, we have the permanent basis of religion, the element which gives all the truth they have to the religions of the world, and which alone will survive when science has destroyed the illusions and superstitions by which they are overgrown.

From this short abstract of the views of these two writers, it appears that there is a general basis of agreement between them, but also a difference of no little importance. Professor Max Müller and Mr. Spencer agree in conceiving the infinite as the correlate or counterpart of the finite, but the former thinks of it as a *Beyond*, to which the mind always reaches out from the limits of the finite, while the latter rather thinks of it as the *presupposition* from which all determination of the finite starts. To the former the infinite is the *posterius* of all positive knowledge, like the indetermined space which stretches beyond every limit we attain; to the latter it is the *prius* of all positive knowledge, like the indetermined space which is presupposed in the definition of special figures. To the former the infinite is never given, except as the negative of everything that is positively known; to the latter it is always given, in a primary positive con-

sciousness which we must have ere we can know anything else. The former takes his stand on the finite as the affirmatively determined reality, which, however, in its limited character always implies something beyond that we cannot so determine; while the latter takes his stand on the infinite as the affirmative basis of all our knowledge—knowledge, that is, conceived as a process of limiting the infinite by negatives.

Now, in this and the following lecture, I shall attempt to show that Professor Max Müller and Mr. Spencer have each taken hold of one half of the truth, but have destroyed its virtue by rending it from the other half. Or, what is the same thing in another aspect of it, they have each taken the idea of God or of the infinite at a particular stage of its development, and have refused to follow the movement of thought any farther. Let me first put generally and abstractly what afterwards will be more fully explained. Professor Max Müller's infinite is the bare negation of the finite. It is therefore only another finite; for it is limited by that which it denies, and in relation to which alone it has any meaning. Mr. Spencer seems at first to escape from this immediate self-contradiction by taking the infinite as the affirmative basis of the finite, the indetermined Being which has no limits in itself, but only receives them from without, from our intelligence. But this pure affirmative basis

turns out on examination to be a blank unknowable, of which we can only say that it *is*, and of which we can say so much only in contrast with the negative nature of the finite. In truth, whether we take the infinite as the negative of the finite, or as the affirmative basis on which the finite is determined by negation, we arrive at the same result. The only difference is that in the former case we add the infinite to the finite, while in the latter case we add the finite to the infinite. In both cases the addition is merely external, and in both cases our infinite becomes itself a finite, because it is only the correlate of the finite. Meanwhile, we lose the true idea of the infinite, of which I began to speak in the last lecture, as the unity which reveals itself in all the differences of the finite, especially in the last difference of subject and object, and which through all these differences remains in unity with itself. And if, as was there maintained, this is just the idea upon which religion rests, we at the same time lose the clue to the interpretation of the history of religion.

Such an abstract statement as this can, however, carry little conviction to those who are not convinced already; and I shall therefore attempt successively to show what is the element of truth and what is the defect in each of these views, and to illustrate what I conceive to be the true idea by contrast with both.

There are many things which, at first, seem to lend support to the view of Professor Max Müller that religion rests on or starts from the conception of the Infinite, as the 'Beyond' or negative of the finite. Such at least may be admitted to be the first *reflective* form in which the idea presents itself to our minds. We first discover the Infinite in the impossibility of being satisfied with the finite, or limiting our thoughts to it. Just because the idea of an infinite or unconditioned principle of unity which underlies all the differences of the objects we apprehend, is the silent presupposition of all our thought, we are unable finally to rest in any one of these objects as an absolute reality, *i.e.*, a reality which does not need to be referred to anything else as its source or explanation. Hence, even before any general idea of the Infinite makes its appearance, we find traces of the tendency, of which Professor Max Müller speaks, to select objects of worship which cannot be completely grasped by the senses or the imagination. The physical vastness of the heavens, the irresistible strength of the elemental forces of nature, may awe and elevate the soul that is not yet able to attach its emotion except to some outward form. Hence the worship of such objects may indicate a stage of religious experience in which the thought of God is, so to speak, outgrowing the possibility of being confined to any object whatsoever. And when this is the

case, the development of religion may be expected soon to bring with it a consciousness that even such forms are measurable and limited, and that neither they nor any other objective forms are fit to receive the stamp of divinity. The divine presence vanishes from the outward world, and the religious consciousness is driven out upon the 'vague and formless infinite,' which is merely the negative counterpart of the finite reality. Thus nothing is left to which the religious sentiment can attach itself but the dim idea of something 'beyond,' to which no form or name can be given, because the moment we attempt to define it, we lose it. Religion becomes a kind of divine discontent with all that is attained or attainable, and an endless aspiration after something which, from the very idea of it, never can be reached, the longing for a morrow that never comes, the effort to reach 'a margin' that "fades for ever and for ever as we move." It becomes a vague yearning for we know not what—

> "The desire of the moth for the star
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow."

Now I shall not deny that there is an element of the truth in this view. Religion does lift us above the immediate present, and joins our existence to an ideal that is never perfectly realised in it. But, if we make this ideal the mere negative of all that is

actual, it ceases to have any meaning. The infinite, conceived as a mere 'beyond,' the mere negation of any limit or determination that may be given, is what the Germans call a false or bad infinite. It is, indeed, little more than the bare word "Not"; and, to any one who realised what it meant, it would be impossible to bow the knee to it. If men ever appear to worship a being, whose only predicate is the absence of all predicates, it is because they take it for more than it is; they intend another infinite than that of which they seem to speak. What causes the illusion is that at first we rise from the finite to the infinite *by negation*, and therefore become conscious of the latter as that which is altogether opposed to the former. Hence heaven is defined, in the first instance, only as that which earth is not; and men seem to be religious, rather because the world is not enough for them, than because they know what else they want. Religion is but an altar reared by unsatisfied and insatiable hearts to the unknown God, who is in some inconceivable way to find means to satisfy them—

> "Ah, love, could you and I with Him conspire
> To grasp this sorry Scheme of things entire,
> Would we not shatter it to bits,—and then
> Remould it nearer to the heart's desire."[1]

But, though in this way we at first become con-

[1] Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyām*.

scious of the infinite merely as that which goes beyond the finite, this is not the true relation of the two ideas. The infinite as a mere 'beyond' or negation of limits, ultimately carries us back to another idea as its explanation and source, the idea of an infinite which is not merely the *negative* of the finite but its *positive presupposition.* In fact, the *negative* conception of the infinite presupposes a *positive* conception of it. For the effort to escape from the limits of the finite is possible only to a thought which in some way apprehends that which is not finite. To know our limits, and to be striving against them, would be impossible, if the infinite we sought were not already in some way present to us: nor could we ever be conscious of the 'world's constraint on our aspirant souls,' if we were really and entirely confined to our prison-house. From this it follows that the idea of the infinite as a *mere* 'beyond' is an imperfect thought, a thought which does not realise its own meaning; for, if our consciousness of the finite did not presuppose the idea of the infinite, and were not based on it, we could not seek for the latter beyond the former. This pursuit of a shadow that seems to fly before us, is really due to an imperfect consciousness of that which is ever with us and within us, that without which we could not be conscious of any object, or even of ourselves. We are seeking abroad

for that which we can only find at home, and which we could not even seek, if we did not, in a sense, already and continually possess it. For in the isolated consciousness of the finite, whether it be of ourselves as finite, or of any other object, we are estranged from ourselves, blind to our own real nature, and unconscious of that which yet we imply in every word we say and every action which we do. We are, above all, in want of a Socrates to call our attention to the universal basis of our existence, and to force us to understand ourselves. For, if the infinite is just the all-embracing unity implied in all our consciousness of the finite, it is possible that the attempt to bring it within our knowledge, or to make it the principle of our action, may be surrounded with difficulties of its own; but, at any rate, in seeking it we are not condemned to strain after something which is far off, still less to pursue a phantom which must always escape from our grasp, but only to return upon ourselves and to recognise what is involved in our simplest consciousness of ourselves, or, indeed, of any other object. We do not need to "go up into heaven," or to "descend into the deep," for "that which is very near us in our mouth and in our heart."

We have now to ask whether Mr. Spencer in his idea of the infinite supplies the element which was lacking to the view of Professor Max Müller. In one

aspect of his theory he seems to do so; for he regards the infinite not as the 'Beyond' or negative of the finite, but as the positive presupposition from which we must start in determining it. In this he seems to be following out one of the most characteristic conceptions of the founder of modern philosophy. "It ought not," says Descartes in his *Meditations*, "to be supposed that we perceive the infinite only by negation of the finite, as we perceive rest and darkness only by the negation of motion and light. On the contrary, we discern that there is more of reality in the infinite than in the finite substance, and therefore that in some sense the idea of the infinite is prior to that of the finite." The infinite is pure affirmative Being without any mixture of not-being; hence in becoming conscious of finite things we always presuppose and partly negate the infinite. The ultimate consequences of this way of thinking were shown in the next generation by the greatest of the followers of Descartes. "All determination," said Spinoza, "is or involves negation," and negation corresponds to unreality. To reach the pure reality of God or the infinite, we must therefore undo (or negate) our negations, we must set aside the unreality which necessarily introduces itself into our consciousness of the finite. We must seek for the absolute reality in that which, as it is entirely without determinations or predicates, is untainted by any negation, finitude, or imperfection. Spinoza thus

reaches the supreme reality of God by denying the reality of everything else; for all the limitations or lines of division by which one finite existence is distinguished from another are regarded by him as the products of an illusive mode of thought, which we must discard in order to reach the truth of things. Hence, in the continually widening vortex of his abstraction, all definite outlines at last disappear; all distinction of material substances is merged in the continuity of one infinite extension, and all distinction of minds in the continuity of one infinite thought; and even this last distinction of extension and thought, or, as we should say, of object and subject, is declared to be a distinction without a difference: for extension and thought are nothing but forms under which the one substance, in itself without difference or division, is manifested to our intelligence. Hence Hegel rightly answered those who accused Spinoza of atheism, by saying that he was not an atheist but an "akosmist"; it was not God, but the world of finite things whose reality he denied.

Now it is easy to see that the logic of Mr. Spencer is identical with that of Spinoza. Like Spinoza, he reaches the infinite simply by wiping out the lines of division between finite things and beings. Like Spinoza, he regards these lines as due to our imperfect ways of apprehending the reality of things. The only essential difference is that he realises, as Spinoza did

not, the effect of his own logic. With a true speculative intuition, but with an utter disregard of his own logical principle, Spinoza at once passed from the mere blank of *indeterminate* being, to which he had reduced everything, to the idea of God as a *self-determining* principle, who is the source of all the manifold determinations of the universe. Mr. Spencer commits no such sublime inconsequence. He sees that the negation of all the determinations of the finite can bring us only to an abstract being, of which nothing can be said except that it is; and this result he accepts. He is, therefore, shut up to the hopeless conclusion that there is an irreconcilable opposition between the reality of things and our thought of them. He holds, in other words, that that which alone we can recognise as reality is that of which we can know nothing, while that which alone we can know is a mere product, and for aught we can tell an illusive product, of our own thought. Owing to the limitations of our minds we are obliged to divide and to relate that which is above all division and relation; for otherwise we could not think it at all. And the glimpse we have of real being is only sufficient to enable us to recognise that we can know nothing; for the idea of God is nothing but the counterpart of the consciousness of our own limitations, which we can see, but which we cannot transcend.

Now, in order to discover the defects of this view,

it is necessary to recognise the element of truth which it contains. It is true that the movement of thought from the finite to the infinite is regressive, and that this regression is caused by a discernment of the negative or unreal character of the finite existence from which we start. It is the illusiveness, the uncertainty, the instability of the things of time and sense which, in the first instance at least, makes us look beyond them to God. It is not because of what the finite *is*, but mainly because of what it *is not*, that we seek refuge in the infinite. As it is the illusion of appearance that awakens scientific inquiry to search beneath or beyond it for that which is not to be found in it, so it is the failure of the world to supply what he at first expected to get from it that drives man back upon God. "Thou hast made us for Thyself," says St. Augustine, "and our souls are ever restless till they rest in Thee." The necessity of thought to rise from the finite to the infinite lies in the awaking consciousness that the finite in itself is naught, that neither the intelligence nor the will can finally accept it as an absolute reality. The ground sinks beneath us, and forces us to look for a more solid foundation on which we may build our lives, nor is it possible for us to be satisfied till we have found one that cannot be moved.

This being the case, it is natural that the infinite which is reached by such a regressive process, should

in the first instance be defined as that in which all the limits and imperfections of the finite are done away, and that the purely affirmative Being, the supreme reality, should be regarded simply as the negative of an existence which is itself negative or unreal. But the question is whether we can stop at this negative result. If so, then, as Dr. Erdmann says, the idea of the infinite would be like the lion's den in the fable; all the footsteps of thought would point inwards, and none would be directed outwards. In other words, the ultimate form of religion would be a pantheism which dissolved everything in a God of whom we could say nothing but that *He* or *It is*.

Now it will be shown in the sequel that there is a stage of religion which corresponds to this description, a stage in which God is viewed simply as an abstract unity that swallows up all the differences of the finite. But it will be shown also that such religion is the product of an imperfect reflexion, which fixes in hard abstraction moments of thought that should be regarded merely as points of transition. For the negative movement of thought by which we rise from the finite to the infinite has no meaning except as the preparation for a positive movement in which we contemplate the finite from the point of view of the infinite. If we can go back upon the infinite as the presupposition of the finite, this regress must enable us to see the finite

in a new light. And this means that the infinite itself must be conceived, not merely as that which the finite is not, but as that which includes and explains it; not merely as an indeterminate background of the finite but as a self-determining principle, which manifests itself in all the determinations of the finite without losing its unity with itself. It *must* be so conceived; otherwise the negative or regressive movement by which we rise to the infinite would itself be impossible. How could we have an idea of the infinite which enabled us to see the defect of the finite without enabling us to see anything more? A consciousness which apprehends a limit must reach beyond it: it cannot be shut out from the positive knowledge of that which gives it the power to detect and look down upon its own finitude. The consciousness of an impassable limit set to our minds by something of which we can only say that it *is*, is a contradiction in terms; for it would involve at once that we could, and that we could not transcend our own finitude. A merely finite being, a being excluded from all contact with the infinite, could not take up any point of view beyond its own limits, still less the point of view of the infinite; and, on the other hand, a being who could raise himself to such a point of view, still more a being whose consciousness of himself and other things was based upon the idea of the

infinite as its first presupposition, could not be excluded from the positive knowledge of the infinite.

It appears then that there is a fundamental incoherence in a view which, though treating the infinite as a positive reality, and, indeed, as *the* reality that underlies all other realities, yet reduces it to that of which nothing can be said, except that it *is*. The first principle through which all is known cannot itself be unknowable or unintelligible. As we are essentially self-conscious, that which is the presupposition of all our life and thought cannot be permanently hid from us. Our very nature is to return upon ourselves, and such a return can only mean that we become conscious of that which at first we presuppose. To say, as Mr. Spencer says, that all things are knowable *through* the idea of the infinite, but that the infinite is *itself* not knowable; to say that our consciousness of it is the condition and limit of all our other consciousness, but that it cannot itself be determined as an object, is simply to deny us the power of reflexion. If we were to adopt such a principle, we could not stop at this application of it; for, as Socrates showed long ago, we *always* know the particular through the universal, *i.e.* we always go upon certain general principles in our consciousness of particular objects; and, if we could not turn the light of consciousness upon these general principles, if we could not define the universals we use,

we could never come to know anything. In truth, all knowledge of universal principles involves the same difficulty, for the universal is always infinite in relation to the particulars that fall under it, though it may be particular and finite in relation to a still higher universal. To know is simply to carry back the particular to the universal, and finally to the highest universal through which everything else is known ; and if this highest universal is itself unknowable, then nothing is knowable. If, then, it be true, as Mr. Spencer tells us, that the infinite is not merely the negative of the finite, not a mere ' Beyond ' to which we reach out from the basis of the finite, but that it is rather the basis of all our consciousness of the finite and even of ourselves, it is absurd to think that it is itself beyond the reach of knowledge. In saying that it is so, Mr. Spencer in effect admits the very doctrine he had seemed to reject.

But if this be so, then the only alternative is that we should cease to regard the infinite after the manner of Mr. Spencer, as identical with the mere abstraction of being, and that we should begin to regard it as a principle which is unlimited and undetermined, in the sense that it limits and determines itself. If this seem an unfamiliar notion, it can only be because we do not reflect on the nature of that regressive process to which all our knowledge is due ; for religion is

simply a higher form of that tendency which, in science, leads us to seek the universal beyond the particular, the one beyond the many. Thus in our first natural view of the world, we are apt to take it as a collection of individual things and beings, each of which is centred in itself, or has only accidental relations with the rest. But science, in the strict sense of the term, does not begin till we realise that these supposed independent individuals are nothing apart from their relations to the other objects from which we distinguish them; that, therefore, their distinction and division from each other is relative; and that, in order to see them as they really are, we must regard them as parts of a whole, differences in a unity, particular manifestations of a general principle, which is at once the source of their distinction and of their relation to each other. Something like this correction of our first ideas we make every time we rise from unintelligent perception to scientific knowledge. For it is the main business of science to make things intelligible through some general law or principle that determines their relation to other things. We thus pass from the denial of the independent reality of the particulars to the assertion of the general principle as the source and explanation of whatever reality they have. But this does not mean that in any case we absolutely lose the particular in the universal. For the same law or principle which is fatal to the

independent existence of the particular object, also assigns to it its special place and function in the whole to which it belongs. And it could not do the former without also doing the latter.

To apply this to the case in point. The religious like the scientific consciousness seeks to find the reason or principle of the particular in the universal; and it differs from science mainly in this, that it cannot rest except in the infinite unity which underlies all the differences of the finite. It involves, therefore, to begin with, a perception of the relative and limited character of all finite things and beings. It makes us retract our first belief in the things of the world as stable and permanent existences, which need to be referred to no cause or principle but themselves. It thus forces us, in a sense, to 'see all things in God,' or to regard nothing as having any reality apart from Him. But it does not force us to regard God as a mere abyss of being, which has no individuality in itself, and which, therefore, is fatal to the individuality of all other existences. On the contrary, in its ultimate form, it leads us to regard Him as a principle of life and intelligence through whom all things are and are known, who is continually realising Himself in all the infinite difference of the natural and the spiritual worlds, and in whom all natural and spiritual beings find their end. Hence the final form of religion is not,

as Mr. Spencer's principles would compel us to think, a quietism which despairs of all finite interests, and dissolves them and itself in the absolute. It is a faith which loses all things in God to find them again transformed, a faith which rises above the immediate disappointments of finite existence, and rekindles the love of life on the altar on which it is consecrated to God. If its first word is that the things of time and sense are naught in themselves, its last word is that *in God*—as elements in the manifestation or realisation of the ultimate principle of reality—they have a reality and an import which can never be exhausted.

LECTURE FIFTH.

MR. SPENCER'S DUALISTIC VIEW OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE FINITE.

Summary of the Views of Prof. Max Müller and Mr. Spencer as to the Infinite—Mr. Spencer's View as to the Two Forms of our Consciousness of the Finite—That he makes Inner and Outer Experience the Sources of Two Opposite Philosophies—That they are really Two Factors in One Experience—That, though Opposed, they are necessarily Related—That to Separate them is to make them Both Meaningless—Consequences of this as regards their Relation to the Consciousness of the Infinite—Sense in which we 'See All Things in God'—Sense in which God is Unknowable.

In the last lecture I endeavoured to throw some light on the idea of religion by considering two views of it which, though not far removed from each other, yet are in one aspect contrasted and opposed. The view of Professor Max Müller is that the infinite, which is the object of religion, is to be taken as primarily the negative of the finite, as a 'Beyond' to which we reach out from the firm ground of the finite, but which we cannot define in itself. To this conception a twofold objec-

tion has been taken. In the first place, if this definition be meant to express that which is common to all religions, it is obvious that, as Professor Max Müller allows, there are many religions which do not rise to the explicit consciousness of this idea of the infinite, and which he can bring under this idea only on the ground that the object worshipped is one which cannot be fully grasped and measured by the senses, an object, therefore, in which the idea of the infinite may be supposed to be *implicitly* present. In other words, he justifies the assertion that the idea of the infinite is essential to religion by attempting to show that it is latent in religion from the first, and that as religion develops, it necessarily becomes explicit. In the second place, the idea of the infinite as a 'Beyond' or negation of the finite is itself an imperfect idea, which does not explain itself, and which can be explained only as a step toward the evolution of a higher idea. But if in defining religion we are to speak of what is implicitly contained in religion, we must follow it to the highest form which alone reveals all that is so contained in it; for, as I showed in a former lecture, it is only the last stage in a development which clearly tells us all that was contained in the first. Now the consciousness of the infinite as a mere 'Beyond' would be impossible, if it were not based on a deeper thought, the thought of the infinite as pre-

sent to us with and in the finite. We could not be conscious of our own finitude, if we were altogether finite. We could not even strive after the infinite, if we did not, in some sense, take our stand upon it in determining our own limits.

Hence Mr. Spencer seems to present us with a more adequate view of the subject when he speaks of the infinite and unconditioned not as the negative of the finite but as the *presupposition* of our consciousness of the finite, the positive basis of our thought of it. As we know by distinguishing and relating, *i.e.* by a process which involves negation, so, he argues, we always go upon the assumption of a primary affirmation, an absolute reality of which all finite things must be conceived as parts or elements. And the one reason why our thought reaches *beyond* the finite is that the infinite is presupposed *in* it. From this point of view we might expect him to adopt an idea of God similar to that suggested in our second lecture, the idea of an infinite being who is the unity of all differences, and especially of the ultimate difference of subject and object. And, up to a certain point, he seems to be on the way to realise this expectation. For he treats the infinite as that which is beyond all differences; and he brings this conception into special relation with the difference of matter and mind, which he regards as including under it all other differences,

But when we ask how he conceives this infinite, we find that, though he declares it to be the presupposition of all our knowledge, he does not conceive it as the unity which is the source and limit of all difference, but only, so to speak, as the empty continuity of a background, on which *we* draw lines of division. Accepting the principle of Spinoza—that all our determination of things involves the introduction of an element of negation into the pure affirmative being of the infinite—he finds absolute reality only in the indeterminate, in the ἄπειρον of Greek philosophy, which neither determines itself, nor is affected by any determination it receives from our intelligence. Hence the idea of the infinite is said to be a "consciousness" which is not knowledge, a consciousness which, though it is the *prius* of everything, explains nothing. Thus, although the infinite is the presupposition of all our thought, it is not a principle by which we can explain any of the differences that come into our consciousness, even the primary difference of subject and object, or of inner and outer experience. It cannot throw any light upon the relation of the mind to its object. It cannot tell us why we distinguish the one from the other or oppose the one to the other; nor can it help us to reconcile their division or bring them into harmony with each other. The consequence is that the object and the self fall apart from each

other in a disunion which admits of no reconciliation. Mr. Spencer's theory thus combines the difficulties of Pantheism and Dualism. It is a Dualism, because it asserts that there is an absolute breach between the two modes of the infinite, which it leaves without any possibility of mediation. And it is an abstract Pantheism, because it conceives the infinite, to which it ultimately refers everything, not as a principle which explains or reconciles the differences of these modes, but simply as a gulf in which they are all finally submerged and lost. When we take matter and mind in themselves, they are absolutely divided; when we bring them in relation to the infinite which is their presupposition, they both alike disappear and dissolve themselves into it.

Now this way of thinking is not peculiar to Mr. Herbert Spencer. On the contrary, it is a way of thinking which has prevailed, in a form more or less akin to that in which it appears in him, ever since the dawn of modern philosophy. We find it already suggested by Descartes, and worked out to its logical result by Spinoza, who held that thought and extension—or, as we might put it, mind and matter—are two parallel but unrelated attributes under which the infinite substance manifests itself. And it has been accepted from Mr. Spencer by Professor Huxley and Dr. Tyndall. It may thus

be regarded as the accepted creed of modern Agnosticism; and it is therefore needful to subject it to a careful examination.

Now we have already discussed Mr. Spencer's statements as to the unknowableness of the infinite in itself; and it remains for us to consider what he says of the two opposite phenomenal modes in which it expresses itself. When we go beyond the infinite, which is the presupposition of all consciousness, there are, he declares, two different ways of looking at the world, each complete in itself. We may regard it either as a material or as an ideal process, either as a series of causally linked states of matter or as a series of causally linked states of mind, according as we consider the objects of our consciousness as external objects, or the ideas through which such objects are presented to us. And each of these ways of representing the world-process would naturally lead, if it were taken by itself, to a special philosophical theory—the former to a materialistic, and the latter to an idealistic theory of the world. "Follow the teaching of the one," says Mr. Spencer, "and you are forced to admit that matter is a mode of mind; accept the results of the other, and you cannot deny the inference that mind is a mode of matter." When we look outwards, we become for the nonce *Materialists:* for all that is outwardly presented to us is matter and motion; and, if we

follow up this mode of consciousness, we ultimately reduce the world to the continuous product of the action and reaction of moving atoms or molecules, which variously attract or repel each other. On the other hand, if we change our point of view and look inwards, we become for the nonce *Idealists*, and regard the external world and all that is in it as consisting in feelings and their complex relations; for it is through these alone that the external world is presented to us. These alone are the immediate objects of consciousness, and it is their association, according to certain general laws, that gives rise to all the knowledge that we possess. Explanation under this mode of consciousness only consists in showing how primitive shocks of feeling may become associated together so as to give rise to a coherent consciousness of things. Each of these forms of consciousness has thus a primitive element to which we may reduce everything, but these primitive elements have no assignable relation to each other. We cannot pass over the gulf between them, or translate the language of the one mode into that of the other. "When the two modes of being which we distinguish as subjective and objective have been severally reduced to the lowest terms, any further comprehension must be an assimilation of these lowest terms to one another; and, as we have already seen, this assimila-

tion is negated by the very distinction of subject and object, which is itself the consciousness of a difference transcending all other differences. So far from helping us to think of them as of one kind, analysis only serves to render more manifest the impossibility of finding for them a common concept, a thought under which they can be united" . . . for "that a unit of feeling has nothing in common with a unit of motion becomes more than ever manifest when we bring the two into juxtaposition."[1] Hence we have two principles of explanation, to either of which we can reduce the whole of things. We can take for granted mind, or rather feelings as the ultimate units of which mind is made up, and on this basis we can work out a complete idealistic system, explaining matter simply as objectified feelings; or we can take for granted matter or its atomic constituents, and on this basis we can work out a complete materialistic system, explaining life and mind as modes of motion. But finally we find ourselves balanced between these two opposite principles and systems, without hope of finding our way from the one to the other. The unity is found only in that unknowable of which, though we cannot know it, we still are conscious, as the absolute reality of which both subject and object may be regarded as modes. In other words, we

[1] *Principles of Psychology*, I. 158, § 61.

are suspended between two finite forms of thought, and can regard the infinite only as the absolute reality which is determined and limited in both, but of which in itself we can say nothing except that it is. "See then our predicament," says Mr. Spencer, "we can explain matter only in terms of mind; we can think of mind only in terms of matter. When we have pushed our explanation of the first to the furthest limit, we are referred to the second for a final answer; and, when we have got the final answer of the second, we are referred back to the first."[1]

We may then sum up the whole matter thus. According to Mr. Spencer, we have and can have no knowledge of the ultimate unity beyond all difference except as 'Being' in the abstract, infinite Being, or, what is the same thing for Mr. Spencer, Being without any determination. We cannot grasp it as a productive principle which explains difference and at the same time overcomes it. It is the dark in which all colours become grey. When we reach this unity, it only remains for us to lose ourselves in it; for the ascent to it is by the way of pure abstraction, and pure abstraction as it ascends draws the ladder after it. When we proceed merely by omitting elements, what is left does not afford any clue to what is omitted. So conceived, the idea of the infinite has no dialectic in it to bring us back to the finite; in other

[1] *Principles of Psychology*, I. 627, § 272.

words, it has nothing in it which could be supposed to give origin to the finite or which could be used to explain it. If, therefore, we return to the finite at all, it must be by a leap from unity to difference, by an arbitrary restoration of the forms of the finite which we had rejected in our upward path. And these forms will remain for us just the same as if we had never gone beyond them at all. We have thus risen for a moment above our ordinary consciousness of the finite world and our finite selves, but we have brought back no light which can make that consciousness more intelligible. We have, as it were, ascended into heaven, but have stolen from it no Promethean spark to kindle a fire upon earth. For the only result is to leave our " two consciousnesses," to use the strange expression of Mr. Spencer, in such complete discord with each other that they become the parents of two rival philosophies: and these two philosophies must continue their internecine war without end so long as human life lasts, or till its antinomies and inconsistencies are lost in the unknowable infinite from which for a season they have emerged.

Now I wish again, before criticising this view, to call attention to the elements of truth in it. In the first place, Mr. Spencer seems to me to be right in regarding the idea of God or of the infinite as the primary presupposition of all our knowledge. I agree with him also in thinking that the idea of the infinite is the

source out of which all religion springs, and that the clear consciousness of it is the last result of the development of religion. For the highest religion must be that in which the principle of all religion comes to self-consciousness. Further, I accept Mr. Spencer's view, in so far as he regards the final difference of the finite, beyond which lies only the infinite, as being the difference of subject and object, of inner and outer experience. These are, as it were, the pillars of Hercules, between which the current of our life flows, and beyond them lies only the ocean. Nay, I am ready to admit that, if we can find no connexion between these two factors, no unity that transcends the division between the consciousness of self and that of the not-self, then our intelligence must be fundamentally incoherent, and unable to answer the questions which it itself suggests. Thus knowledge will be for ever vexed with an opposition which cannot be overcome, because it is an opposition between *two first principles*, each of which, from its own point of view, dominates the whole world. For, though there is a principle which is above both, it cannot, if this be the true conception of it, be used to bridge over the gulf, but only makes us conscious of its depth and darkness.

To this view, however, there is, at the outset, an obvious empirical objection. If it were true, consciousness would always need to alternate between its two modes, between inner and outer experience, and

it could never bring them together, except in an idea of the infinite which leaves out all that distinguishes either mode. Mr. Spencer forgets that this impossible feat of combining the consciousness of the self with that of the not-self, is performed by us every day and in almost every act of thought; for we are constantly putting our inner experience in relation to outer experience, and our outer experience in relation to inner experience. The consciousness of our own feelings or ideas and the consciousness of objects are not "*two consciousnesses,*" but rather they are two elements of one consciousness, which are always present together. Our whole intellectual life is a continual return upon ourselves from the outward world; our whole practical life is a continual effort after the realisation of ourselves in the outward world. A theory that divorces these two elements from each other, and maintains that there is nothing to unite them but the abstraction of Being, is at variance with obvious facts of experience; for experience teaches us that the inner and outer life are two things which are never found separated, two things which we may distinguish, but which are never actually disjoined from each other. Hence it is absurd to say that it is impossible to unite or to relate, what we are always uniting and relating; or to speak of two separate 'consciousnesses,' when what we have is only one consciousness, though with more than one element included in it. Those who talk of

an impassable gulf between the inner and the outer world may fairly be asked to produce one of them without the other. And if any theory makes it necessary to separate them, we shall surely say, 'so much the worse for the theory,' and not 'so much the worse for the facts.'

But, further, not only may we thus meet Mr. Spencer by an appeal to the facts, but also we can see quite clearly the reason why the facts are so. We can see, in other words, not merely that the inner and the outer world are not disjoined in experience, but we can see that it is *impossible* in the nature of things that they should be so disjoined, and even that there is a contradiction in the very idea of their separation. In fact, if we try in thought to carry out a thoroughgoing separation of the inner and the outer world, we empty them both of all their contents, these contents lying just in their relations. When Mr. Spencer speaks of two independent 'consciousnesses,' one of which gives rise to a consistent materialism and the other to a consistent idealism, it may fairly be answered that both of these theories—as Mr. Spencer states them—are the results of a false abstraction, by which elements of consciousness, only to be known in their correlation, are torn asunder, and set up as independent realities, each complete in itself without the other. Let me show this by considering very shortly what is the general meaning

and purport of each of these supposed rival philosophies.

In the first place, what is *Materialism*, as Mr. Spencer understands it? It is a theory, we must answer, which takes the world purely as an external world wherein everything is explained by matter and motion. It is a theory which looks upon the objects of the external world—which we know only through perception and thought and in relation to the subject within us—as if they existed in themselves altogether apart from relation not merely to us but to any such subject. Now it would take us too far to enter into the complete proof that such a view is baseless and inconsistent with itself. But it is scarcely necessary to call up the ghost of Kant, or even of Berkeley, to show that the idea of an intelligible world without any relation to an intelligence, leads, if it is carried out to its logical results, to absurdity and self-contradiction. It must, of course, be admitted that in our ordinary consciousness of the world, we do not take note of the fact that an object implies a subject. Indeed, it requires a distinct effort of reflexion to realise that it does; for, at first, we are so much occupied with the object we are contemplating that we do not turn our attention to the self for which it is. But our forgetfulness or want of reflexion cannot alter the fact—that knower and known are essentially correlative, and that neither of them can

be conceived to exist without the other. Divest the world of all its relations to a subject, and it sinks into a "thing in itself," a *caput mortuum* of abstraction, of which nothing can be said. It ceases to have either primary or secondary qualities, to be coloured or extended or solid, or to have any one of the characteristics by which we determine it as material: for all these imply relations to a percipient or thinking subject. Even the assertion that it exists has no right to be called Materialism any more than Idealism. For thus viewed apart from all its relations to the subject, it is nothing but the same indetermined being which Mr. Spencer calls the Absolute. Thus Materialism, like every partial truth when treated as the whole truth, commits suicide. The object setting up for itself apart from the subject, ceases to be even an object.

Nor is it otherwise with what Mr. Spencer calls Idealism, the doctrine that all objects are reducible to feelings or ideas, states or data of a subjective consciousness. Our inner life is nothing but our return upon ourselves from the outer life, and the consequent reaction of the self within upon the world without. I admit, of course, that when we do thus return upon ourselves, or direct our thought to the subject that thinks, we are apt to oppose ourselves, our own feelings and ideas, to the objects and facts that excite them. At such times we are intensely conscious of the self as distinct

from the objective world, and not seldom we exaggerate this distinction into a contradiction. The loneliness and isolation from which the individual spirit cannot escape—the ring, as it were, of adamant that is about each one of us, preventing us from coming into union with any even the nearest brother soul—is a frequent theme of poets and moralists. In each individual there is a special stream of tendency, a particularity of interest, which he cannot entirely communicate to any one else. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy." This sense of isolation is often vividly expressed by Matthew Arnold, and may be said to be one of the main themes of his poetry:—

> "Yes, in the sea of life inisled
> With echoing straits between us thrown,
> Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
> We mortal millions live alone.
> . . . . . .
> Around us spreads the watery plain,
> Oh, might our margins meet again!
>
> "Who ordered that this longing's fire
> Should be, as soon as kindled, cooled?
> Who renders vain this deep desire?
> A God, a God their severance ruled,
> And bade between their shores to be
> The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea."

Even in regard to the realm of thought and knowledge many writers are fond of dwelling upon the idea that each of us lives in a little world of his own, in which

things are arranged in a way not quite identical with the mental cosmos of any other individual. And one of the two great individualistic schools of morals—that to which the Stoics belong—is constantly insisting on the lesson that the isolated self-determination of the individual is that in which alone he shows his character as a moral being; while the opposite school holds that his only possible aim is to seek his own pleasure and avoid his own pain. Such exaggerations of the subjective aspect of our consciousness have their value, and even their necessity, at particular stages in the life of the individual or the race. But they contain only one side of the truth, and if they tempt us to obliterate the other side, and to entrench ourselves in a theory of subjective idealism (such as is commonly attributed to Berkeley), they become self-contradictory and contain their own refutation. The consciousness of self, it must be again pointed out, is always primarily and immediately a return upon self from objects; and though this return involves a kind of opposition between the self and that from which the return is made upon it, yet it should be remembered that a negative relation is still a relation, and, in this case at least, a necessary relation. If there is no consciousness of the object except in relation to the subject, as little is there a consciousness of the subject which is not mediated by a consciousness of the object.

And if it be said that, in the practical life, self-consciousness goes beyond the objective consciousness and reacts upon it, yet this does not permit us to treat the inner life in this sphere as forming a whole in itself, extraneous to and independent of the outer life. For if, in action, we go beyond what is already contained in our consciousness of the objective world, yet, in the first place, we could not have gone beyond it except by means of it; and, in the second place, we go beyond it only as we set up for ourselves a new end to be realised in it. It is thus the presupposition from which we start, and it determines the form of every end which we can seek to realise. Hence the idea of a pure consciousness of self, shut up in itself without any knowledge of objects, is the abstraction of one element in our life, which, in losing all relation to the other elements, loses all its own meaning. And the same is true of a pure self-determination such as some moralists have imagined, *i.e.* a determination of the self without any relation to objects, or which is not at the same time the determination of something other than the self. The moral law has no meaning, it is absolutely emptied of all its contents, if we take out of it all relations to the world and especially to the social environment in which the individual stands. The conception of the individual subject as at any time alone with himself, conscious of nothing but his own states, and seeking nothing

but his own pleasures—or, at best, seeking only the realisation of a purely subjective law—is a fiction which, logically, is as fatal to self-consciousness as it is to the consciousness of the objective world. The Berkeleian Idealism—if this view of the pure subjectivity of consciousness is to be attributed to Berkeley—rests on a confusion between the truth, that all objects are objects for a subject, and the error that the only possible objects, or at least direct objects, for such a subject are its own states. The truth is that we are conscious of our own states as such only in distinction from, and in relation to, the objects to which we refer them; but neither these states nor anything else can be known except in relation to a subject. And the same is true on the practical side. We cannot find ends for our action in our own feelings apart from objects; nor can we determine ourselves with a view to our own pleasure without reference to any objective end in which pleasure is found. We must seek our pleasure *in* something, and joy or sorrow can come to us only through the attainment or the failure of ends, which are other than the joy or sorrow itself. For good or ill we are bound to the universe, so that we can neither know our own nature, nor seek our own good, apart from it. And a theory which speaks of inner experience as one thing and outer experience as another and totally different thing, might as well, to employ a

homely illustration which Professor Ferrier was fond of using, speak of a stick with one end only. It is as absurd in the realm of spirit as in the realm of matter to suppose that we can have an inside without an outside, or an outside without an inside.

But if this be true, it leads us directly to the refutation of another part of the theory of Mr. Spencer. If the consciousness of the self is essentially related to the consciousness of the not-self, and cannot by any possibility be disjoined from it, it follows that the consciousness of the unity, which is beyond the opposition of self and not-self, need not remain an empty and otiose abstraction, to which no further determination can be given than that it is. It would be truer to say that our consciousness of objects and our consciousness of the self, when we take them in their isolation from the unity, involve such an abstraction; and that, therefore, we cannot see either in its truth, until we see them both as embraced in or derived from *it*. Mr. Spencer tells us that, when we lift our thoughts to the infinite, we leave behind us all that characterises either the subject or the object, so that nothing remains but the vague thought of indeterminate being, which may be said to include everything, only because it excludes nothing. In like manner Spinoza speaks of those who forget the finite whenever they turn their minds to God, and again forget God whenever they turn their minds to the

finite world.[1] But, on the principles of Mr. Spencer, such forgetfulness is absolutely necessary; for, on these principles, it is impossible to think of the infinite *except* by abstracting from all that determines the finite as such, and especially from the two imperfect modes in which the finite is given to us. On the other hand, if these two modes of the infinite be in vital relation to each other—if there be no element in self-consciousness which does not involve a relation to objects, and no element in the consciousness of objects which does not involve a relation to the self —it becomes absurd to suppose that, in rising to that principle of unity which is presupposed in both, we need to turn our back upon either. Rather, we must say that, in rising to that unity, our intelligence is, for the first time, taking up the point of view from which they can be seen as they truly are. It is our *divided* consciousness, in which we take finite things as if they could be understood in their isolation, in which we rend the self from the world and both from God—it is *this* consciousness that misleads us. Nor can we see anything in its true meaning and import, till, in a sense, we "see all things in God," *i.e.* till we see them from the point of view of their unity as parts of one organic whole, as the manifestations of one principle. The ultimate unity, which, as Mr. Spencer rightly maintains, is presupposed in

[1] *Eth.* II. 10, Schol. 2.

all our knowledge of objects and of ourselves, is the end as well as the beginning of that knowledge. And, when we carry our life back to it, we do not submerge all our knowing and being in a gulf of nescience, but only bring it into relation with the principle by which it must ultimately be explained. On the other hand, Mr. Spencer's view involves that, after all the other questions which we *can* answer, we come upon a question which we can never answer, and in the attempt to answer which all our previous results give us no help. If that were the case, we must undoubtedly agree with him in regarding the whole movement of religious life as an effort to determine the indeterminable, to give imaginative form or logical definition to that which by its very nature can neither be perceived nor conceived. And the natural end of the process would simply be the discovery of this incapacity, and the resolve to 'cultivate our gardens,' and worship nothing at all. On this view the whole religious history of man would be the process whereby he learns to dispense with a religion: it would be of none but a negative use; for all that it could teach us would be to recognise the nature of the illusion, which thus at once tempts and baffles us, and to understand why it must do both. It would teach us, in short, that, in the first instance, we inevitably *seek* to define the Infinite, because the consciousness of it is ever with us, while we as inevitably *fail* to define it, because it is the infinite, and

therefore the negation of all definition. We should thus at last discover the nature of the adamantine wall which hems us in, and we should cease to waste ourselves in vain efforts to break through it.

Now, from what has already been said, it appears that this is just the reverse of the truth. For, if the self and the object are so essentially related as we have maintained they are, then all our progress in knowledge of objects must deepen and widen our consciousness of the self; and all our knowledge of ourselves, won by the whole effort of our theoretical and practical lives, must, in its turn, be an increase in our knowledge of the objective world. Further, it is obvious that when we thus break down the supposed wall of division between the consciousness of self and that of the not-self, we must also break down the wall of division between both and the consciousness of God. And, instead of thinking of ourselves as confined to the finite to the exclusion of the infinite, we must rather recognise that everything we can learn of the former is also a step in the knowledge of the latter. The consciousness of the finite is based on the idea of the infinite as its first presupposition; nor can it become knowledge in the highest sense till it understands this presupposition; till, in other words, it recognises the consciousness of the finite subject and the consciousness of the finite object as elements in the consciousness of God. Recognised

or not, they are such elements; and the growth of man's religious consciousness is therefore related, not accidentally or externally, but essentially and necessarily, to his growing knowledge of the world and of himself. The same development of thought which shows itself in the advance of modern upon ancient ideas of nature and of man, brings with it that deepening and widening of the idea of God which may be traced in Christianity, as compared with Greek Polytheism and Jewish Monotheism: a deepening and widening which is perceptible even in the works of those who deny the very existence of God, and is sometimes the cause of that denial. For a higher idea necessarily brings with it greater difficulties, and its rise is apt to produce scepticism, till those difficulties are solved. We may doubt God's existence, just because the idea of Him has gained so great fulness for us, that we cannot easily satisfy ourselves with imperfect representations of Him. If, on the other hand, there appears at any time to be an advance in man's knowledge of the finite world without a corresponding advance in the religious consciousness, we may explain it by the alternating way in which the process of development necessarily goes on. In the slow secular progress of man's spiritual history, one element may often seem to gain a temporary prominence at the expense of another. The interest of the outward life may for a time throw that of the inward life into the shade; or, on the other

hand, an intense self-consciousness may for a time cause the individual to withdraw into himself from his natural and social environment. And, in like manner, the finite interests of man's earthly existence may for a time seem to leave no room for the development of the religious consciousness. But if, according to the German proverb, it is provided that the trees shall not grow into the sky, it is equally provided that they shall always grow towards it; and the sinking of the roots deeper into the soil is inevitably accompanied or followed by a farther expansion of the branches. Human development will belie all its past history, if the new light upon man's relations to the world and to his fellowmen, which science is every day bringing to us, does not give occasion to a new evolution or interpretation of the idea of God.[1]

To overcome an error, we must discern its partial truth. In one way Mr. Spencer's view meets and satisfies the religious consciousness. It was not in an irreligious spirit that the friend of Job asked the question, "Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour," said the prophet Isaiah. "Of

[1] In what has been as yet said, it will be observed that we have to do only with the abstract idea of God as a principle of unity in all our consciousness, not with any further conception of Him such as we may afterwards meet with in special religions.

Thee," said Hooker, "our fittest eloquence is silence, while we confess without confessing that Thy glory is unsearchable and beyond our reach." Such utterances of the religious consciousness have sometimes been used to confirm the idea that God is, in the proper sense, *unknowable*. And Mansel, with a strange unconsciousness of the meaning of his own logic, tried to show that all revealed religion is founded upon that doctrine. But to say that we cannot know God to perfection, is only to say that we cannot know everything; while to say that we cannot know Him at all is to say that we can know nothing. We cannot know God to perfection, because we cannot know the world or ourselves to perfection; but all our knowledge is based on the presence of these three inseparable elements of consciousness within us, and all our knowledge is therefore a part of the knowledge of God. It is true that, just because He is the light of all our seeing, He can never be completely seen; for the return we make on the ultimate presupposition of our being can never be a final return. It is true that "the margin" of knowledge "fades for ever and for ever as we move"; but, if we might correct the metaphor, it fades not *before* us merely, but also *into* us. We are not condemned to chase a phantom which continually flies before us, so that we are as near it at first as at last. Rather, we are pursuing a course of self-development in which we are continually realising more

deeply and fully what the world, the object of all our thought and action, is, and what *we* are, who think and act upon it; and in which, by necessary consequence, we are continually learning more of God, who is the ultimate unity of our own life and of the life of the world. Our growing knowledge amid seeming ignorance may perhaps be illustrated by an imperfect analogy. It is sometimes said that we cannot know the mind of Shakspeare, because we cannot gather to a focus in one inclusive conception all the wealth of thought and feeling which presents itself, when we try to form an estimate of such a many-sided genius. In reality, we know more of the mind of Shakspeare than we know of that of many of our nearest friends; for the good reason that there is a great deal more to know. In like manner, a deep sense of the impossibility of measuring the object which goes along with the idea of God—the feeling that prompts St. Paul, after saying that "we know God," to correct himself and add: "or rather are known of God"—must always be an element in our consciousness of the divine principle of unity from which all our rational life proceeds and to which it tends, and to the growing apprehension of which all knowledge is to be regarded as a contribution. For all our difficulties of thought and action must inevitably gather to a climax in our religion, just because our religious view of things, if it be real and sincere, is the

final summing up—the concentrated result—of all our thought and activity.

A farther reason, why we are specially conscious of ignorance in this sphere, may, as I have already suggested, be derived from the fact that human life is a process of development, and that in the order of development the secular consciousness, the consciousness of the finite world and of the concerns of our finite life in it, anticipates or is prior to the religious consciousness. Hence the latter passes into a new phase only in order to correspond with the advance and meet the difficulties of the former. Thus in the secular consciousness there are continually arising new questions and wants, new divisions of the elements of our existence against each other, new conflicts of thought and will, which are imperfectly met in any solution or reconciliation given as yet by religion, and which, therefore, may be said to *anticipate* a new development of the religious idea. Religion is thus constantly struggling with a growing problem to which no solution is final. In this sense, therefore, it is possible even for the religious man to say that he does not *know* God, without knowledge of whom, nevertheless, all his religion would be baseless. And we can understand that in the violent antithesis of his rhetoric, St. Augustine is uttering a truth when he says that the divine Being *sciendo ignoratur et nesciendo cognoscitur.* "When we would

say we know Him, He is hid from us: when we declare that we know Him not, He is revealed to us." Such verbal contradiction is only a more emphatic way of expressing the fact that in the religious consciousness all our knowledge and all our sense of its defects are concentrated in one—concentrated, just because it is in this sphere that we cease for a moment to be the victims of abstraction, or to satisfy ourselves with the imperfect and hypothetical modes of thought which are sufficient for ordinary purposes; just because we are here in direct contact with the absolute reality, which is the beginning and the end of all our rational life. For where we rise most *above* our finitude, there of necessity we are most distinctly conscious of it. But this is something very different from the consciousness of an iron wall of limitation, fixed by our finite nature, behind which the infinite is for ever hid from us. On the contrary, it is the consciousness of a Presence within and without us, which, if it makes "our mortal nature tremble like a guilty thing surprised," is yet "the master-light of all our seeing," and is continually lifting us above the weakness of which it makes us aware. Our ignorance of God is thus, in one aspect of it, the effect of too much knowledge. For it is simply the incapacity of rising to the idea of a unity, which yet is implied in all our knowledge; or it is the incapacity which necessarily besets every growing

intelligence, of fully realising that unity amid the many conflicting interests of our theoretical and practical life. In either case it is consistent with a conviction that man's finite existence is positively, and not merely negatively, related to the infinite: it is consistent with the idea that the divine is "not far from any one of us," and that, indeed, we can know nothing, not even ourselves, except in the light of it.

While these pages are passing through the press, my attention has been directed (by Professor Paulsen's *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, p. 319) to certain passages in the concluding sections of Mr. Spencer's *Ecclesiastical Institutions* which, though capable of being interpreted in conformity with the view of religion given in the *First Principles*, yet suggest a more positive idea of it. Thus in §§ 659-660, Mr. Spencer argues that though "the very notions, origin, cause, and purpose, are relative notions belonging to human thought, which are probably irrelevant to the Ultimate Reality," yet, "amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious, the more they are thought about, there will remain one absolute certainty, that he is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed." This energy Mr. Spencer farther characterises thus: "The last stage reached," in the development of religion, "is recognition of the truth that force as it exists beyond consciousness, cannot be like what we know as force within consciousness; and that yet, as either is capable of generating the other, they must be different modes of the same. Consequently, the final outcome of that speculation commenced by the primitive man, is that the Power manifested throughout the world distinguished as material, is the same Power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness." In the next section, Mr.

Spencer goes on to say that "those who think that science is dissipating religious beliefs and sentiments, seem unaware that whatever of mystery is taken from the old interpretation, is added to the new." Farther on in the same section he takes occasion to remark that "the necessity we are under to think of the external energy in terms of the internal energy, gives rather a spiritualistic than a materialistic interpretation to the Universe"; though further thought obliges us "to recognise the truth that a conception given in phenomenal manifestations of this ultimate energy can in no wise show us what it is." Towards the end of the section, Mr. Spencer compares our present knowledge of things to "an undeveloped musical faculty which is able only to appreciate a single melody, but cannot grasp the variously entangled passages of a symphony." "So, by future more evolved intelligences, the course of things now apprehensible only in parts may be apprehensible all together, with an accompanying feeling as much beyond that of the present cultured man, as his feeling is beyond that of the savage. And this feeling is not likely to be decreased but rather to be increased by that analysis of knowledge which, while forcing him to Agnosticism, yet continually prompts him to imagine some solution of the Great Enigma which he knows cannot be solved." In this passage, Mr. Spencer seems for a moment to hesitate between the idea of the absolute unknowableness of God, and the idea of an imperfection of knowledge due to the conditions of an intelligence which is in course of development. These statements are all so guarded that they are capable of being reduced to the Dualistic and Agnostic theory of the *First Principles*, but I think they would lose a great part of their meaning if this reduction were strictly carried out. At least, they show that, if Mr. Spencer still adheres to the doctrine that religion is based on a consciousness of the Unknowable, yet he is anxious to claim for it some of those feelings of reverential awe, which are possible only towards that which we partly know and, therefore, see to be worthy of our reverence.

LECTURE SIXTH.

THE IDEA OF GOD AS THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF KNOWLEDGE.

Mr. Spencer's Way of Reaching the Infinite by Abstraction—Its Likeness to the Method of the Mystics—Logical Error of Mysticism—Necessity of Combining Synthesis with Analysis—That the Development of Knowledge is Organic, and therefore at once Progressive and Regressive—The Idea of God as the Ultimate Principle—Kant's Three Ideas as at once the Presuppositions and Objects of Knowledge—That Principles are not necessarily Objects of Faith as opposed to Knowledge—Illustration from Ethics—God as the First Principle and the Ultimate Object of Knowledge.

We have now considered the main elements of Mr. Spencer's view of religion, and of the relations of the religious idea to experience. We have seen that in his view, the essence of religion lies in a 'consciousness' of the infinite which can never become knowledge, and that, on the other hand, what we call knowledge is for him a double consciousness of the finite which can never be brought into harmony with itself. The finite is thus supposed to be presented to us in two independent modes of inner and outer experience,

which confront each other in irreconcilable opposition, so that it is impossible either to reduce one of them to the other, or to explain both as the forms of a higher principle. In opposition to this view, I endeavoured to show that the two modes of finite experience of which Mr. Spencer speaks, the consciousness of the objective world and the consciousness of our own subjective life, are essentially related to each other; and, indeed, that neither of them has any meaning or content apart from this relation. Consequently, every step we make in the knowledge of either is a step in the knowledge of the other, and also of the principle of unity which is presupposed in both. Thus our intelligence—as indeed is implied in its being a *self-conscious* intelligence—moves in a continual cycle; and all the knowledge it can gain either in the experience of the outer or of the inner life, must ultimately cast new light upon the principle from which it starts. God, or the infinite, is the presupposition of all our rational life, and, therefore, the knowledge of God is the final goal to which it tends.

In order to give a little further illustration to this theme, which is of fundamental importance in the philosophy of religion, it may be useful again to call attention to the defect in Mr. Spencer's method which leads him to an opposite result, and makes him regard the infinite, which he acknowledges to be the presupposition of all knowledge, as in itself unknowable.

Mr. Spencer, as I have already pointed out, accepts the principle of Spinoza that "determination is negation." Under the conditions of human thought, it is impossible to determine what anything *is*, except by the negative process of distinguishing it from other things, *i.e.* of saying what it *is not;* and a negative process, as Mr. Spencer thinks, is necessarily one which is always carrying us farther and farther away from the positive nature, or real being of things Hence it follows that, in order to reach that reality which is without negation, that absolutely real being which is beyond and beneath all other being, we must invert this process and get rid of those determinations that hide it from us. Our regress upon the infinite is thus a process of abstraction, in which we strip away all the determinations of the finite; and the infinite upon which regress is made is simply the pure 'being,' the abstraction of bare position or affirmation, which remains when we have taken away all distinction and relation from its simple unity with itself. As in the dawn of Greek philosophy the Eleatics reduced the content of philosophy to the simple principle that 'all is one,'—as if, in the all-embracing intuition of the whole, every difference was lost or submerged; so Mr. Spencer lets every distinction of the finite, even the last distinction of self and not-self, drop away, and rests in the emptiness of the infinite, as if it alone were the reality of all realities.

Now we should scarcely have expected to find Saul among the prophets, or an apostle of modern science among the mystics. But the great error of mysticism was just this, that it thought to reach the deepest reality, the absolute truth of things, by the *via negativa*, the way of abstraction and negation; in other words, that it tried to approach the infinite by turning its back upon the finite, and not by seeking more thoroughly to understand the finite. Hence the mystics supposed that the highest idea—that which comes closest to the truth of things—must necessarily be that which has least content; and they treated pure being, the simplest of all abstractions, as representing something more real than is to be found in any specific form of existence. To them, this simplest of all thoughts seemed to have a depth of mysterious significance which no other thought could claim; and when they were baffled in the effort to fathom this self-made mystery, they immediately proceeded to explain their failure by the limitations of the human mind, and the unsearchableness of God. In truth, they were "seeking the living among the dead." The astronomer who denied the existence of God, because he had swept the heavens with his telescope and had not been able to find Him, was a wise man compared with those who supposed that He was hidden in the emptiest of all our ideas, and who blamed the weakness of their mental vision, because they could not

find Him there. For, of a truth, there is no mystery of any kind in the idea of 'being' in the abstract, *except* its abstractness, *i.e.* its imperfection. But this imperfection or incompleteness is such, that, whenever we think of it, we are forced to go beyond it, and to give it some farther determination or characterisation, in order that we may bring it nearer to our thought. Strained to this extreme of abstraction, our thought springs back like a bent bow, and seeks to fill up the void with matter. But this means not that 'pure being' is incomprehensible, but rather that it is only too easily comprehensible: not, indeed, as an independent reality which is complete in itself, but as an element in a greater whole, which we may distinguish but cannot separate from its other elements. To attempt to fix it in abstraction is therefore to deprive it of whatever meaning it has. And to complain that *when* we have thus isolated it, we cannot discover in it the fulness of reality—which we naturally expect the highest principle of thought and reality to possess—or to blame the human mind for its incapacity to see such fulness in it, is to shut our eyes and complain that darkness is not visible. It is not the weakness, but the strength of the intelligence that prevents it from treating a part as if it were a whole, a relative term as if it existed apart from everything else.

And this leads me to say that the error of mysticism—the supposition that the *via negativa*, the way

of abstraction, will lead to the highest truth, or indeed to any truth at all—is one of the most pernicious errors in philosophy. Abstraction or analysis is an element in scientific method, but taken by itself it will produce nothing but a mere external arrangement of things by genera and species—what is called in Logic a 'tree of Porphyry,' the tree that of all others best realises the nursery rhyme: "This is the tree that never grew." Only in so far as the comparison of many facts enables us to detect in them a principle of unity which dominates all their difference and explains it, can abstraction lead to any valuable result. The abstracting or *analytic* process, by which unity is separated *from* difference, is nothing without the *synthetic* process, by which unity is discerned *in* difference, as the principle which at once originates and overcomes it. The true method, therefore, is a method which combines analysis and synthesis in one, and which moves forward by a perpetual *systole-diastole*, at once towards a higher unity of thought and towards a more complete determination and articulation of all the facts embraced under it. It is, as Mr. Spencer himself has done much to show, a process both of differentiation and of integration; and its aim is to make knowledge not merely a system, but an *organic* system, in which every part is seen in its due relation to the other parts, because it is seen to be determined by the one principle which

gives life to the whole. In this process abstraction and analysis have undoubtedly a great part to play: for what science and philosophy want is to rise from the particular to the universal; or, in other words, to reduce to one simple explanation many facts which previously have lain scattered and unrelated. But this simplification is valuable only because it enables us to see our way through many details and complexities which have hitherto resisted all the efforts of our thought, but which become pliant and intelligible to him who has grasped the law of their variation. If, *after* we have reached such a universal or law, such a simple explanation of many complex phenomena, we are sometimes at liberty to dismiss many of the particular details from our memory, and to regard ourselves as possessing in the law the substance and kernel of them all, this is only because in the law we have a clue to guide us to the particulars which at any time it may seem necessary to verify. For the claim of any law or principle to be regarded as representing the truth of things in a higher degree than any of the particulars that fall under it, lies not in its abstractness, but rather in its concreteness, *i.e.* in the fact that it is the brief abstract or quintessence of many particulars; that, in short, it is the fertile source to which may be traced, and by which may be explained, not only the particular effects whence our first knowledge

of it was derived, but an indefinite number of other effects which were not at first present to us.

Now all this has a definite application to our subject. For, if it be true that the necessary method of our thought is synthetic as well as analytic, that, in other words, its object is to bring many particulars to a focus in one thought, and so to detect the one simple principle that underlies all their difference, then the universal, the one in the many, cannot be taken as a mere product of our own mind, but must be regarded as the most real of all things, and indeed as the source of all other reality. And this must above all apply to the object of religion, which Mr. Spencer calls by the name of the infinite. If the infinite, as he maintains, is the ultimate unity to which all things must be referred, and if the consciousness of it underlies all our knowledge, it cannot be right to take it as an empty abstraction or generality, which in itself is indeterminate and incapable in any way of determining itself. If our consciousness is necessarily one with itself in all its difference, and if the factors that make it up, the objective and the subjective consciousness, are necessarily bound together, so that one of them cannot be conceived without the other, then the idea which, as Mr. Spencer confesses, is the keystone of this unity, the principle that makes it one consciousness, cannot be empty and indeterminate. On the contrary, as it is

implied in all our other consciousness, and as it is that which gives unity to all our other consciousness, so it must be the most fertile of all principles—that by which all other principles must ultimately be explained, and without reference to which, no other explanation can finally satisfy us. Just because it is the primary truth upon which all our intellectual and practical life is built, it must be that which casts light upon everything, and upon which everything reflects back light. If it is the most universal of ideas, it must at the same time be the one which is fullest of meaning and that which, indeed, is continually fertile of new meanings; for its universality means not merely that it excludes nothing, but that it includes and explains everything. In a sense such a universal may be beyond knowledge; not, however, because it is too vague and general for definite thought, but for the opposite reason, that it is *inexhaustible.* It hides itself, if at all, not in darkness but in light. It is the ground on which we stand, the atmosphere which surrounds us, the light by which we see and the heaven that shuts us in. It is not only in all, but to all, and through all.

> "*Intra cuncta nec inclusus,*
> *Extra cuncta nec exclusus.*"

But, just for that reason, everything we know is a contribution to the knowledge of it, and nothing can be really known apart from it. For if it be true that

our intelligence is organic, it cannot grow but by the evolution of its first principle, and every differentiation of its organs and functions must bring *with* it, or *after* it, a new integration; which in this case means a deepening knowledge of the principle itself.

Perhaps I may make this point a little clearer by saying that the growth of knowledge, and the development of our intelligence that goes with it, is at once a *progressive* and a *regressive* process. By this I mean that the effort which gives rise to all science and philosophy—to find the unity of law under the difference of facts, and the unity of a higher principle under the difference of laws—is an effort to verify and realise in detail that which, by our nature as rational beings, we practically assume from the first. The earliest writer who pointed definitely to this view, though he did not fully express it, was Kant. Kant said that the impulse which stimulates us to seek knowledge, and the principle that guides us in acquiring it, are both ultimately due to *three ideas* bound up with all our consciousness—the ideas of the world, the self, and God. These ideas are the *first* presuppositions of our intelligence, and at the same time they mark out the highest ends at which that intelligence can aim. We assume, to begin with, the unity of the world in all the diversity of its phenomena, or rather we go upon the tacit assumption of it; for even to the most uncultured in-

telligence it is one world, in one space and one time. Yet to *demonstrate* the unity of the world, to exhibit the necessary interconnexion of all its changing phases, the reciprocal relations of all its parts and laws, is the last goal of science. We assume, again, the identity of the self through all its various and constantly changing stream of thoughts and feelings; for no rational being can think of there being more than one self, one centre of consciousness within him. The very conception of a "varied many-coloured self," as Kant once put it, *i.e.* of a self which is not an absolute unity through all the diversity of its experience, would involve a scepticism fatal to all thought or knowledge. Yet to work out this apparently simple presupposition of all our life—to show the identity of the self as realised in all the diversity of its powers, and maintained through all the changes of its intellectual and moral history—is the never perfectly attained goal of all psychology. Lastly, the intercourse of the soul with the world always presupposes an ultimate unity, a principle which is revealed in all their difference and which overcomes it; and the consciousness of this unity has underlain all the religious life of man in all ages. Yet to make intelligible in detail the complete correlation of the inner and the outer life, and to show how the ever renewed conflict and reconciliation of the self and

the world become the means to the realisation of that principle of unity, which is continually working in both, would be to attain the highest aim of all Philosophy and Theology; it would be to perfect religion and bring it to complete self-consciousness.

These ideas are thus at once the beginning and the end of our rational life. At first, therefore, they are rather presupposed than distinctly thought of or expressed: or, at least, the thought and expression of them are for a long time very inadequate and incomplete. At first, they seem too near to man, to be in any proper sense *known* to him. Just because they are one with the very existence of his intelligence, he takes them for granted without thinking of them, or believes in them on evidence which is altogether insufficient. He accepts them without criticism, in any shape in which they may be presented to him, and without discerning their real character and meaning. Yet from the first they show their presence in his spirit by the efforts which they force him to make, to discover some kind of self-consistent explanation of his life and of the world in which he lives, and to connect both with some power which he represents as divine. It is, however, only through a long process of development that the influence of these ideas makes itself felt in restraining and guiding the wayward movement of phantasy, by which the first naïve answer is given to the questions of

the immature intelligence. And a still longer process is necessary before such imaginative solutions of imperfectly conceived problems can give place to definite canons of scientific method, and definite efforts of philosophic reflexion, to grasp the ultimate truths of reason. Yet every step toward the conception of the world or of any part of it as a system, every step toward the comprehension of the unity of the intelligence in all the variety of its activities, every step toward a rational view of the relation between the intelligence and the intelligible world, is a step toward the verification and, in an etymological sense, the *demonstration* of the principles of unity presupposed in the whole process. The process of knowledge is therefore, as has been said, at once a progressive and a regressive process. It is an advance towards a completer synthesis of the ever increasing multiplicity of phenomena which are presented to us in experience, and at the same time it is a new return upon the principle or principles of unity which are presupposed even in the simplest perception of these phenomena. Thus every movement of scientific or philosophic synthesis, as it is the reduction of a manifold to a simple form, is the recovery of the unity of the intelligence out of the dispersion of facts; and it is therefore a practical verification of the presumption of unity involved in our first apprehension of them. In advancing towards

a completer view of things, in bringing more and more of the facts of the universe within his thought, man is not, so to speak, losing himself in the object, or taking into his mind an alien matter: he is only providing the appropriate nutriment for his growing intelligence. For the facts which he appropriates in knowledge are by the same process transmuted into the substance of the mind that grasps them, and so become the means to the development of the ideas which constitute it as a mind. Thus all experience is a process by which we discover what is really meant in, or implied by, the consciousness of the world, of self, and of God—the three ideas which, in their unity and difference, form the circle within which our spiritual life always revolves.

A farther light may be cast on this subject, if we bring it into connexion with a familiar controversy in relation to the first principles of knowledge. Mr. Spencer's assertion that the absolute or infinite is unknowable, though the idea of it is presupposed in all other knowledge, may remind us of the old argument of the sceptics that the principles of knowledge must be matters of faith, because we cannot go beyond them or explain them by anything else. We cannot, it was argued, *know* the principles of knowledge, as we know other things by their means. We explain facts by tracing them to other facts as their causes, but how can we ask for any cause for the principle of causality

itself? We can say that there must be a reason for any consequent, but how can we speak of a reason for our requirement of reasons? The effort to prove the principles of knowledge seems necessarily to involve a *petitio principii.* Hence it is not unnaturally maintained that these principles are unknowable, and that the intelligence, which in all its action is guided by them, can never turn upon them or seek for any evidence for their truth.

Now there is an answer which has been sometimes given to this objection, and which is good so far as it goes, but not, I think, quite satisfactory. It may be said—it *is* already said by Aristotle—that the principles of knowledge cannot be less truly known than what we apprehend by means of them. The old lady who, being afraid that an insecure bridge would break down under her, got herself carried over in a sedan chair, might give a lesson to those who think that what is known through a principle can be better known than the principle itself. The principles of knowledge are not like the tortoise which supports the world, but which requires something else to support itself. For there is no space beneath them into which anything could fall. By the very nature of the case they are the boundaries of the intelligible universe. If we cannot know them, it is only in the sense in which we cannot see light, because there is nothing else than light to see it by. If Diogenes

used a lamp at noon-day, at least it was not to seek for the sun. The proof of the principles of knowledge can only be what Kant called a "transcendental deduction," *i.e.* it can only be a regressive argument which shows that every other truth depends upon them, and must be proved by means of them. All experience goes on the assumption of them, whether that assumption be made consciously or unconsciously; and, if *they* are not true, there is nothing true. No argument from fact can possibly be brought against that on which all facts rest. But as little can a direct argument *for* them be based on any fact. The sceptic is to be refuted only by showing that there is no place left on which he can erect his batteries.

This reply is good so far as it goes; but it is not quite satisfactory. For it would naturally lead to a conception of the process of knowledge as twofold in character; as consisting, on the one hand, in a process of reasoning *back* to certain principles, and, on the other hand, in a process of using these principles to connect facts, and so reasoning *forward* by means of them to new results. On this view the method of *philosophy*, which seeks to establish first principles, would be essentially different from the method of *science*, which seeks, on the basis of these principles, to determine the relations of phenomena to each other. Knowledge would be imaged to us as a line with a fixed beginning and no end. Before

us would lie an infinite series of results which we might go on gradually bringing within the sphere of our knowledge, but behind us would lie only certain simple principles, and perhaps finally only one principle, of which we could learn nothing more after we had once apprehended its meaning. Now this idea of knowledge is, I think, based on a false analogy. For every increase in our knowledge, at the same time that it opens to us a new prospect, and brings within our view a new field of experience, also throws new light upon the meaning of the first principles on which science is based. *Aspice, respice, prospice.* Every advance in scientific knowledge, while it involves a new comprehension of the facts present to us in our experience, involves also, as has often been remarked, a prophecy of the future. But, moreover — what has been less often considered—it involves a retrospect, or as Plato called it a reminiscence, of something that has been from the beginning. This reminiscence is, however, no mere recollection; for it enables us to see the meaning of the past in a way we did not see it while we were in it; in other words, it supplies us with a new interpretation of the principles on which we have all along been proceeding. Hence the true image of our growing knowledge of the world and of ourselves is to be found in the development of a germ, which shows what is in itself the more fully and clearly the more material

it assimilates from the outward world, and which, while adapting itself to its environment, is continually increasing the sphere of its own life. What is implied in an advance of science is not merely that we derive new conclusions from old premises, or that we reduce new facts under the same old principles, but that we come to see the old principles themselves under a new aspect, just because we go back upon them from a widened view of the world. Why do we count a knowledge of the particular laws of nature higher and more valuable than a knowledge of the facts that fall under them? It is not only because it gives us a clearer apprehension of these facts and a greater command over them, but also because these laws stand nearer to the highest principles of our thought, and throw a more direct light upon them. Thus, all the knowledge of particular causes which we acquire, is a contribution towards a better knowledge of the principle of causality, and of its place in relation to other principles as an explanation of reality; and ultimately every discovery of a special law of causation has its main value in throwing light on this higher problem. For, indeed, the settlement of this problem means nothing less than the determination of the limit, if there be a limit, to the mechanical view of the world.

This truth, *i.e.* that the highest end of a science is the developed knowledge of its principle, may be

further illustrated by reference to the science of ethics. For, as Socrates showed, there are certain primary conceptions involved in all our moral judgments; and these conceptions when analysed resolve themselves into different aspects of the idea of a *summum bonum* or highest end, for which all rational beings exist and act. Now all our effort to comprehend the facts of the moral life is useful mainly as it helps us to develop this idea, and to bring to a clearer consciousness all the elements that are contained in it. Thus, the science of morals returns upon the principle which is involved in the moral consciousness, and its highest value is just that it enables us to define that principle. Its advance is a cyclical movement, which yet is not a *circulus vitiosus*, because the circle is a complete one, that does not leave outside of it any fact with which morals is concerned; but a mind that has consciously traversed the circle stands in an entirely new attitude to the principle, and may be said to possess it in quite a different sense from one that has not done so. Although, therefore, the process proves nothing outside of itself, yet it is a real development of thought; and this, of itself, is the highest kind of proof of the principle in which the development begins and ends.

Now this truth has its highest application in relation to the idea of God, as the principle of unity in all consciousness; especially if we consider that idea in connexion with the subordinate ideas of self and not-

self, which constitute its primary difference. In one sense, the boundaries of knowledge remain always the same; for the identity of the self, the manifoldness of the world, and the principle of unity-in-difference which manifests itself in both—these three ideas, in their opposition to, and their connexion with each other—form a circle from which thought can never escape. But, in another sense, each and all of these ideas are new in every age, not only because new material is continually being brought within the circle so described, but because the assimilation of that material is at the same time the process by which the nature of the circle becomes manifested, and its boundaries ever more clearly defined. Thus the permanence of the three great limiting ideas by which our whole life, theoretical and practical, is governed, does not exclude the vicissitudes of a long process of development, in which each of them takes into itself the most varied content, and becomes in a sense transformed by assimilating it. But the transformation is always organic, always held within the limits of the identity of one life ; and its last result is therefore only a more adequate consciousness of the meaning and relative value of the ideas by which it was guided and stimulated in all its progress. Thus what, in one point of view, are the starting points and first presuppositions of knowledge, are in another point of view to be regarded as the ultimate truths in which the whole process of knowing

finds its terminus. We cannot say a single rational word without expressing or implying a principle of unity which manifests itself in and through the difference of self and the world; and the utmost goal of all our knowledge, nay, we may say of our whole rational life, is to discover what is contained in that principle. *Self*, *Not-self*, *God*—these three ideas—mark out the sphere within which the movement of our spirits is confined; and all that we can attain by the utmost effort of our spirits is to realise a little more clearly what we mean by the *Self*, by the *Not-self*, and by *God*.

The general result of what has just been said is that the process of knowledge is not the mechanical building up of a structure upon foundations that are once for all fixed and secure, but that it is the development of a germ which never adds anything to itself without transubstantiating it or changing it into its own form; and which turns the outward conditions of its environment, even those that seem at first to be most unfavourable, into an opportunity for the exercise of its own powers, and the expression of its own life. But such development involves a continual new return upon itself, upon the principle of unity that was hid in the germ, so that in all its expansion it may be said to be only becoming more truly itself.

Now what *is* the germ in this case, in the case of the conscious or rational life of man? It is obviously

nothing else than the principle of unity which shows itself in the opposition and connexion in all the conflict and reconciliation of self and not-self; and that, as we have seen, is just what is implied in the idea of God. Of course, as I have already repeated more than once, it is not meant that all religion, or indeed any religion which is not reflective, is clearly or fully conscious of this. The meaning is that it is the presence of this unity in all our consciousness of objects and of ourselves, which continually lifts men above the finite, or forces them to seek for something stronger, higher, better, something which contrasts with immediate reality and is regarded as more real than it. It is only the presence of the unity, the totality, the infinite, in man's consciousness that can awaken even a suspicion of the imperfect, the limited, the partial character of his finite existence. But if this infinite, as Mr. Spencer rightly holds, is the beginning of consciousness, the presupposition of everything else, if it is for us the first principle of all knowing and being, then, by the very nature of the case, it must be also the last principle of which all our existence and all the existence of the world to which we belong, is the manifestation, and of which all our thought and science is the interpretation. In this sense it is no mere pious metaphor, but a simple expression of the facts to say, that all our life is a journey from God to God, and that in Him we live

and move and have our being. All our secular consciousness can only be the explication or, if we prefer the Spencerian word, the differentiation, of the primitive unity presupposed alike in consciousness and self-consciousness, and all that it can achieve by its activity is, so to speak, to furnish materials for the religious consciousness. In other words, the results of the process must be ultimately reinterpreted in the light of the unity which they presuppose; and they cannot but remain imperfect and abstract till they have received this reinterpretation. Let us state as broadly as we please the facts of man's ignorance, his error, or his sin; let us darken as we please the picture of his thoughtlessness, his immersion in the finite, his sensuality that enslaves him to the world, his vanity that shuts him up in himself—and we cannot easily exaggerate any one of these things—yet it is not for a moment to be supposed that he can escape from God, or cease to live in Him. How the divine unity can be consistent with the free play of the life of man may be a hard problem, but in our anxiety about its solution, let us not forget the conditions of the problem itself. Man is free, in so far as he is free, just *because* he partakes of the divine nature, *i.e.* because he cannot be conscious of himself except in relation to God; and if he could cut the bond of union, neither the consciousness nor the problem of freedom could exist for him at all. To see all things in God is thus

not the pious dream of an idealist philosophy. In what other light *could* we see them, but either that of the unity which is the light of all our seeing, or of some principle which is a secondary consequence of that unity? To act with God as our end may seem to be a rare and exceptional thing, but in so far as He is the end which is beyond all other ends, and in so far as the satisfaction of the self that is within us can only be found in the attainment of this absolute end, we may fairly say that all action is ultimately a seeking for God. As Plato said, there is no man who does not desire the good, and is not unwillingly deprived of it. As St. Augustine said: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls are ever restless till they rest in Thee."

LECTURE SEVENTH.

THE MAIN STAGES IN THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION.

Analysis of the Idea of Evolution—How the Ideas of Identity and Difference, Permanence and Change, are combined in it—Two Questions as to the Method of Evolution: (1) How the Religious Consciousness Develops out of the Consciousness of the Finite—*Priority of the Objective to the Subjective Consciousness, and of both to the Consciousness of God—How far the Different Forms of Consciousness are Separable or reciprocally Exclusive—Criticism of Goethe's View of this Question*—(2) What are the Stages in the Development of the Religious Consciousness itself—*What is meant by Objective, Subjective, and Absolute or Universal Religion.*

THE last lecture has brought us to an important turning point in our argument. According to the definition previously given, the idea of God in its purest germinal form—the form which is at the root of all the other forms of it—is the idea of the unity presupposed in all the differences of the finite, especially the difference of self and not-self, of inner and outer experience. But if this be assumed, we are necessarily led to regard that idea, not only as the beginning or first presupposition, but also as the end

or last interpretation of our lives. It cannot be one of these without being the other. The first principle which is involved in all our consciousness of things and of ourselves, must needs also be that in the knowledge of which all our other knowledge culminates. If all our divided consciousness of the finite be only the differentiation of the primal unity of the infinite, then it is obvious that we cannot fully understand the finite till we have carried it back to that unity again. As our life is organic, so our knowledge is not to be represented as an edifice built on definite foundations, which remain beneath it and support it but are not visible in its structure. Rather we must regard it as the development of a germinal principle, which is continually revealing itself more fully in all that arises out of it, and which therefore finds in its own results at once its evidence and its definition. We cannot understand the life of reason in us except as a process in which every step throws new light not only on the objects of the intelligible world, but also upon the intelligence that knows it, and so upon the principle of unity that manifests itself in both. Unless in this sense God is knowable, nothing can be knowable. If, therefore, we admit that we cannot know God, it can only be in the sense that the consciousness of Him is *gradually* realising itself in our progressive intelligence, and that the process whereby we come to see things in their relation to God is

never complete. In religion our 'highest faith' and our 'deepest doubt' meet together, not because the idea of God is empty, but because in it are concentrated all the problems of our life; but for that very reason it is only in it that they can meet with a final solution.

If, however, we adopt this view as to the nature of religion and its relation to the other elements of our consciousness, we are immediately brought face to face with another problem. We have to ask what is the *law* or *method* of the development of religion. As a preparation for the solution of this problem, however, it is necessary in the first place to call attention to some elements in the idea of development to which we have not as yet referred. Development is a process which it is difficult to describe in logically consistent language, because in it difference and unity interpenetrate each other so closely and inextricably. Look at it in one way, and we might say that a developing being *never changes.* He is the same from the beginning to the end of the process of his life; for all his changes are conceived as the farther manifestation of his identity, and he can admit into his being no element which is not in some way brought under that identity. Look at it in another way, and we might say that his existence is *all change,* and even that his changes are so complete that there is nothing in him which remains unaltered. For such a being is an *organism;* and just so far as

he is so, the change of any element in his being necessarily involves the correlative change of all the other elements. Like Wordsworth's cloud, he "moveth altogether if he move at all." Hence, of his changes we might say that, more than any other kinds of change, they are *revolutions*, transitions in which "old things pass away and all things are made new." The explanation of this verbal contradiction is, however, not far to seek. It lies just in this that the attempt to bring the facts of development under such inadequate categories as those of bare permanence or bare change, necessarily leads to a kind of dissection of the idea, which is its destruction. The alteration which is involved in development, is not a superficial change in the qualities of some permanent substratum which remains substantially unaltered beneath it: nor is the identity which is preserved through change merely a capacity for the reproduction of the same quality (in a thing which meantime has shown other qualities) so soon as the original conditions are restored. Development is a process in which identity manifests itself *just in* change, and returns upon itself *just by means of* change. It is, in the language often used by Mr. Spencer, a process of differentiation and integration, *i.e.* it is a movement into difference from a unity which is never lost in that difference, but which holds its elements together even in their extremest antagonism, and which therefore in the

end restores itself in a higher form just by means of that antagonism. Expressed in the set metaphysical terms of Hegel, what any life or process of development shows us is a *Universal* which manifests itself in the opposition and relation of *particulars*, and which just through that opposition and relation, realises itself as an *individual* whole. This idea has sometimes been thought a very mysterious one, because, though we are familiar enough with illustrations of it, exact analysis betrays in it a complexity which we do not ordinarily recognise in those illustrations. Hence we are tempted to get rid of the difficulty by reducing development to some idea that is simpler and easier to grasp. But, if we insist on explaining development by no higher category than that of physical causation, or by the external action and reaction of independent substances, it will necessarily become mysterious; for such explanations will always leave an unexplained *residuum*, an element which escapes from the grasp of our method, and presents itself at the end as a problem with which it cannot deal.

Yet, in one sense, the idea of development is of all ideas that which ought to be most intelligible, illustrated as it is by the very nature of our intelligence, and by the whole course of its life. For, while self-consciousness is in one way the very simplest thing we know, the very type of simplicity and transparent self-identity, and we

could scarcely find any better word to express clearness of evidence than to say, "This is as certain and evident to me as that I am I"; yet in this apparently simple unity, the diversity of all the mighty world is mirrored. In the consciousness of self we have subject and object as essentially diverse, and yet essentially identical, and every movement of the life of a self-conscious being is a movement out into what seems an irreconcilable difference, and back into unity again. The theoretical and practical life of this apparently simple unit is one in which it continually goes out of itself to that which is most opposed to it; yet in all its travels it never meets with anything from which it cannot return to itself; it never wanders so far that it is not with a moment's self-recollection at home. And all that it finds in its wanderings it can make part of itself, and weave into the web of its own life. If, therefore, the idea of organic development seems, when we analyse it, to be very complex; if it even, on the first view of it, appears to contain an insoluble contradiction, this is not because it is something far from us, but rather for the opposite reason, that the greatest of all illustrations of it is so near to us that its complexity is hidden from us, and its unity is apt to be regarded as mere self-identity. The inner life of the intelligence is like a sea whose transparency hides from us its depth. Hence we are more apt to recognise the full bearing of the idea of de-

velopment in less adequate but more palpable illustrations of it. Thus, *e.g.* we are familiar with the fact of history that the most highly developed civilisation is that in which there is the greatest division of labour, and at the same time the greatest unity and co-operation; and it is not difficult to see that one of these could not exist without the other. We are also familiar with the fact that the highest animal is that which has the greatest variety of organs, and passes through the greatest variety of changes, and which, nevertheless, through all this difference and change remains one with itself, so that its whole life is the expression of one principle. And, if we recognise man as higher than any other animal, it is because, by the variety of his perceptions and of the powers of his intelligence, he has the most extensive and manifold experience of the world, while yet the unity of his consciousness is able to reduce all this experience into the continuity of one life. In each of these cases, therefore, we are able clearly to see that development is a process at once of differentiation and integration, *i.e.* that it is a process in which difference continually increases, not at the expense of unity, but in such a way that the unity also is deepened.

Now, when we attempt to use the idea of development, in the sense in which we have analysed it, as a key to the history of religion, we find that the problem we have to solve takes two forms, which

we cannot entirely separate, but which it is necessary to distinguish. In the *first* place, we have to ask how the religious consciousness develops out of the consciousness of the finite or in connexion with it. And in the *second* place, we have to ask how the religious consciousness itself advances from one form to another, from the lowest awe of the supernatural which we can call a religion, to the highest form of Christian faith.

I shall begin with the first of these questions. It is obvious that in the different elements of our consciousness there is a certain *order of priority*. "What is first in nature," as Aristotle said, "comes last in genesis." The unity which underlies our divided consciousness of the object and of the self is involved in all that we think and all that we do: in the theoretical process by which we seek to know the world, and in the practical process, by which we endeavour to carry our ideals into reality in the world. But this unity, just because it is the first presupposition of all our consciousness, is the last thing we know. We rise to the infinite from the finite, just because the infinite is naturally prior to the finite, and the last thing thought does is to turn back on its first principle. In a similar way, the consciousness of the subject underlies the consciousness of the object, but we come to know it last. Just because the object presupposes the subject, it is from the object that the subject returns upon itself; and

the theoretical apprehension of the world goes before the practical reaction by which we seek to realise ourselves in it. The general order of the elements of our consciousness is, therefore, the following. The consciousness of objects is prior in time to self-consciousness, and the consciousness of both subject and object is prior to the consciousness of God.

But this time-priority must not be taken to mean that there are three processes in our life which follow in a certain order, so that the one must be completed before the other begins. Such a view is obviously contradicted by facts. We do not begin to act *after* we have finished knowing, nor do we begin to be religious *after* the highest form of morality has been achieved. All these forms of consciousness—theoretical, practical, and religious—exist together, and we seem to find them all existing together from the very dawn of human life, or, at least, from the earliest period in the history of the individual and the race in which we can find distinct evidence of the existence of any one of them. The priority is not like that of bud, flower, and fruit, in which the later supplants the earlier. The exclusive occupation of consciousness by one of its forms is only apparent. It has, indeed, been noticed that the child at first prefers to speak of himself in an objective way, as if he were conscious of himself only *as* he is conscious of other objects: and the philosopher Fichte is said to have made a feast to

celebrate the moment in which his child first said "I"; as if then first the child had distinctly compassed the act of self-consciousness, and asserted his claim to the rank of an independent spiritual subject. In like manner, it would not be difficult to show that there is some interval between such assertion of the self against the object, and any utterance of the child that gives distinct evidence of a feeling of reverence for a being higher than itself. And the same thing holds good for the childhood of the race. On a rough general view of the facts of history, it might seem that in the earliest stages of man's life on earth, he was hardly to be called self-conscious, and he was not conscious of God at all. The savage, like the boy, seems to live almost entirely outside of himself, and his passions appear to act upon him like natural forces, without his ever distinguishing himself from them, or considering whether he shall yield to them or not. And when self-consciousness begins to arise in him, it shows itself at first in an unmeasured self-assertion, which is checked not by a consciousness of law within, but only by the perception, or the fear, of a greater power without him. In other words, he seems to be incapable of rising above a sense of dependence on what is external, except to indulge in a self-will that respects nothing. When he breaks his slavery to the object, it is only to fall under a worse slavery to his own caprice. If, in some degree,

the case is otherwise with the young who are brought up under the influences of a civilised society, this seems to be the effect of an external training, which forces upon the individual at an early age what otherwise would not have come to him till a much later stage of his development. Hence the savage, who never seems to submit to limitation except from an external force, or to become free except in the way of throwing off all law, would fairly be taken as the true type of the natural man; and, if so, then it might reasonably be said that the natural man is capable of fear and of presumption, but never of reverence; that he can be superstitious or profane but never religious. In other words, he does not really look *up* to the power before which he trembles, or, in any sense, conceive it as a better self, with which he can identify himself even while he bends before it. And this means that he does not in the proper sense worship at all; for he does not rise to the idea of any being who deserves the name of God, as being higher than the self and yet not a mere object or not-self.

A striking expression of this view of the religion or superstition of savages may be found in Goethe's *Wanderjahre*, where he is speaking of the necessity of teaching religion to children. "Well-born, healthy children," he declares, "bring much with them into the world: nature has given to each of them all that he needs in the struggle for existence. This it is our duty to develop,

though often it develops itself better without any interference. But there is one thing which no one brings with him into the world, though it is that which is all-important, if he is ever to show himself to be truly a man." What is that? It is reverence. "No one has it to begin with." It may, indeed, be said that "the fear of uncivilised races, excited by overpowering natural forces or by mysterious and threatening events, has supplied the germ out of which a purer feeling has gradually arisen." But Goethe answers that there is a distinction of kind between such fear and religious reverence. "Though fear is natural enough, reverence is not in the same sense natural. Men tremble before a mighty being, known or unknown. The strong man seeks to combat, the weak man to escape it: both wish somehow to get rid of it, and feel themselves fortunate if they have succeeded even for a time in putting it aside, and have thus in some measure recovered for themselves the freedom and independence of their nature. The natural man repeats this operation a thousand times in the course of his life. From fear he strives to attain to freedom, from freedom he is again driven back into fear, and all this swaying from one side to another never leads to any progress. To fear is easy, though it brings with it dispeace: to cherish reverence is hard, though it puts us in harmony with ourselves. Unwillingly does man de-

termine himself to reverence, or, rather, he never does determine himself to it. It is a higher sense which must be given to his nature, and which is spontaneously developed only by a few specially favoured beings, who therefore have at all times been regarded as saints, or rather as gods."

To this, as a popular description of the facts, a description only meant to show their broader outlines, there can be no objection. But, if it were to be taken quite literally, in the sense that man *never* learns reverence, till it is put into him from without by some kind of external discipline, it would involve a division which cannot be admitted to exist, between the different stages of man's life as a conscious being: for it is not possible that the consciousness of objects should exist entirely apart from the consciousness of the self, nor either entirely apart from the consciousness of the unity, which is beyond both, yet presupposed in both. Hence also it is impossible that the feeling of dependence on objects without us should be absolutely separated from the feeling of independence in relation to them; or either of these feelings from the feeling of reverence for that which is above both us and them. It is undoubtedly important to make a distinction between these different feelings: nay, it may be admitted that there are crises in our intellectual and moral life, in which we seem to ourselves to exchange one of these attitudes of mind

wholly and entirely for another. The transitions of our development by which one element of our consciousness is brought into prominence and another sinks into the background, often seem to us, at the moment of experiencing them, to be complete revolutions of thought and life, revolutions in which nothing in the first stage has prepared us for the last, and nothing in the last recalls the first. But, on closer consideration, we find that such appearances are illusive. If the soul of man is not divided into different and independent compartments, in one of which is contained the consciousness of the object, in another that of the self, while a third is left for the consciousness of God, neither can its life-history, the life-history either of the individual or of the race, be conceived as a process in which external additions are made to what existed before, or one kind of consciousness is substituted for another. On the contrary, man's spiritual history is, in a deeper sense than even the growth of a plant or an animal, *a development.* And as we have already indicated, the essential characteristic of development is that nothing arises in it *de novo,* which is not in some way preformed and anticipated from the beginning. Growth, as Kant said, is "not addition but intussusception"; it is a process in which new elements are taken up only as they are assimilated, and in which, therefore the widening of the circle of existence never ceases to

be controlled by the self-identical nature of the being whose life is thus enlarged. Hence it is only in so far as the consciousness of objects already contains in it implicitly the consciousness of the self, only so far as self-consciousness is already implicitly the consciousness of God, that the latter can develop out of the former. A clear analysis of the phases of our life which follow and make room for each other, teaches us to recognise that the transition is never that revolutionary change which, on the first view of it, it seems to be. Even in geology the catastrophic view of the earth's changes had to be abandoned; because closer examination showed that the causes that produce the greatest effects are those that work slowly, silently, and gradually. Still less is it possible to maintain a catastrophic view of the history of *man*, in view of the organic identity that binds each man to himself, and the whole race of men to one another, in all their stages of development.

The bearing of this upon the argument is obvious. Our immediate consciousness of objects seems at first to be a mere presentment of them to the passive subject, to a self that is not in any way occupied with itself, or even conscious of itself at all. The outwardly directed gaze seems simply to admit the object, and not to react, still less to be aware of itself as reacting, upon it. But, in the *first* place, we have learned to recognise that, whether we are conscious of

it or not, there *is* always a reaction, an analytic and synthetic activity of thought, even in our simplest perceptive consciousness; for, without this reaction, no idea of any object as distinct from, and related to, other objects could ever arise to trouble the self-involved sleep of sense. Apart from such reaction, we might say that the sensitive subject would remain for ever confined to itself, were it not that in that case there would properly be no self to be confined to; for where there is no outward, there is, of course, no inward life. It is thus the mental activity of the subject that creates for him a world of objects, or, to put it more simply, that enables him to become conscious of the world of objects in which he exists. He cannot be an inhabitant of the intelligible world, unless, by the activity of his own intelligence, he makes himself so. In the *second* place, not only is the subject active in perception, but he necessarily and inevitably has an inchoate consciousness of himself as a subject, in distinction from the objects which that activity enables him to apprehend. For to apprehend an object, as such, is to distinguish it from, and relate it to the self that is conscious of it. It is to refer an idea or feeling to that which is other than the self, to reject it from the self and to objectify it; and such a rejection or repulsion necessarily involves, on the other side, a withdrawal of the self from the object. The simplest outward-

looking gaze, which seems to lose itself in the object to which it is directed, yet recognises that object as other than itself or its own state; and, indeed, all its absorption in the object may be said to be its effort to heal the breach, of which, in the very act of perception, it has become conscious. Hence we come to the result that even in its utmost apparent *passivity* of perception, the mind is *active;* and even in its utmost absorption in the *object*, it is conscious of the *self* in distinction from it. It is true that the subjective aspects of the consciousness of objects are at first latent, or they are present only in an imperfect and inchoate form. Attention is not specially directed to them; and in any description which the individual would give of his own consciousness, they would generally be omitted. But they are always there. For it is not possible, in the nature of things, that there should be an object, except for a subject, or without that subject distinguishing the object from itself, and itself from the object. In this sense there can be no consciousness of objects without self-consciousness. Even, therefore, if the word "I" be delayed for a little, the inchoate thought of it cannot be wanting to one who is conscious of objects as such.

And the same is true of the idea of God, as the unity which is presupposed in the division of the self from the not-self, and in all other divisions of

consciousness. Even in the extremest opposition of the subject to the object, their unity cannot be entirely lost; for every distinction is necessarily a relation, and implies an identity within which the differentiation takes place. The implication that there is such a unity may lie in the background of the mind; nevertheless, it cannot but influence it even from the first. It is the basis and presupposition of our rational life, the atmosphere in which it moves, the bond which holds it together. A man cannot escape its power by not attending to it, any more than he can escape being a self by attending only to objects. And, like the idea of self, the idea of God must at a very early period take *some* form for us, though it may not for long take an adequate form. Man may hide his inborn sense of the infinite in vague superstitions which confuse it with the finite; but he cannot altogether escape from it, or prevent his consciousness of the finite from being disturbed by it.

The progress of consciousness is thus the explication of a confused totality in which the three factors are at first merged and mingled, but it is never the sudden emergence of any quite new factor. For, though a rational being may exist in which many of the elements of the rational life are as yet undeveloped, no rational being can exist in which any of these elements is altogether absent. The advance to a new consciousness is in every case the discovery of

deeper meanings or implications in an old one. Or, to put it in a way already suggested, it is a progress which is also a regress. While, therefore, it is true that the general order of advance in man's life is from consciousness of objects to self-consciousness and from that to the consciousness of God, yet this must not be understood as if it meant that one consciousness passes away and another consciousness comes in its place, or even that new elements are externally added to those already given. On the contrary, even in the earliest stage of his being, when his thought is most of all concentrated upon the interests of the outward life, self-consciousness, and the consciousness of God are not wanting. Thus, almost from the first, he is conscious not only of dependence on objects but of a relative independence in relation to them; and he is conscious also of relation to a power which is not himself, and yet not a mere object like other objects around him. He is capable, therefore, not only of fear of that which is other and stronger than himself, or, on the other hand, of a presumptuous self-confidence, which makes him defy every external authority and power, but of *reverence*,—the fear which is the beginning of wisdom, because it involves a sense of unity with that to which as natural and finite beings we look up.

But, if this view of the relation of the three elements in consciousness be adopted, it casts an

important light upon the *second* question which we had to answer, as to the *method of development of the religious consciousness itself*. If the priority of the consciousness of objects to the consciousness of self, and of the consciousness of self to the consciousness of God, does not mean that any one of these ever exists without the others, what does it mean? It can only mean that in successive periods each of these elements in turn determines the form of our conscious life, and so becomes the mould in which all our ideas and ideals are cast. What we find in any one stage of man's history is not the isolated presence of any one element of life; but, though all the elements are present, one is emphasised, and it tends to give the law to all the rest. It becomes, so to speak, the key-note with which all the others have to bring themselves into correspondence. Thus it may, I think, be proved that the priority of the consciousness of objects to the consciousness of self, and of the consciousness of self to the consciousness of God, shows itself not in the isolation of any one of these ideas from the others, but rather in the way in which each of them becomes for a time predominant and forces the others to take on its own shape and to speak its own language. Hence we can distinguish three stages in the development of man, in which the form of his consciousness is successively determined by the ideas of the object, of the subject, and of God as the principle of unity

in both; and each of these stages brings with it a special modification of the religious consciousness. It will remain for future lectures to work out this thesis more fully. At present I only wish to illustrate it so as to make its meaning clear.

Our first step is the easiest. It will scarcely be denied that the earliest life of man is one in which the objective consciousness rules and determines all his thoughts, or that in this stage both his consciousness of himself and his consciousness of God are forced to take on an objective form. Man at first looks outward, and not inward: he can form no idea of anything to which he cannot give a 'local habitation and a name,' which he cannot body forth as an existence in space and time. Even of himself he can think only as an object among other objects, and he sees nothing of the peculiar character that is given to his existence by his being a subject for which all objects exist. He has none of that keen sense of individual personality—that consciousness of an isolated inner life, from which everyone else is excluded—which arises in men at a later period. He scarcely even distinguishes himself from his body. But if, in this way, the *consciousness of self* is imperfect or latent, if it is forced to take on an objective disguise, still more clearly is this the case with the *consciousness of God.* God necessarily at this time must be represented as an object among other objects, a mere

external force or power before which man trembles with a sense of weakness. And Goethe's description is so far true that it is very difficult to trace in this fear anything but man's abject terror for that which is stronger than himself. For just in so far as God is conceived as merely an object, the worshipper must feel towards Him as a slave, who obeys without a consciousness of anything in himself that lifts him into unity with the power to which he submits.

But while this is the general tendency of a merely objective view of God: yet we must remember that even in this stage the real nature of the relation is continually reacting against its imperfect form, and making it impossible to regard God simply as an object like other objects, *i.e.* as an object that exists outside of them and of the subject, as they exist outside of each other. On the contrary, there is always some effort imaginatively to exalt the object selected as divine above other objects, and to assign to it attributes which are inconsistent with its externality, or its mere individuality as an object in space. Poetry soon begins to idealise it, and lift it beyond the ordinary level of finite existence. And while, in the earliest time, the tendency is rather to select the objects which are farthest from humanity as most divine, and so to deify rather stones and trees and animals or the heavenly bodies, this gradually yields to the tendency to humanise the gods or to deify men. Anthropomor-

phism changes the powers of nature at first worshipped into 'the fair humanities of old religion'; or, where this is impossible, it dethrones the earlier gods to make room for a new humanised dynasty. And at a very early date ideas of transmigration, transformation, and possession are brought in—to deliver the god from the chains of the objective nature attributed to him, and to turn him into an all-pervading presence.

If what I have said is true, man's life in this earliest stage of it, will necessarily be vexed with an inner contradiction, owing to the necessity of expressing all the content of a human life in the lowest form of consciousness—the consciousness, that is, of mere objects as such, and even of material objects. The consciousness of the self and of God must be dwarfed and distorted by the mould into which they are forced. They must present themselves in a shape which at once disguises their real nature, and disturbs the order of the objective world into which they are intruded.

Again, it is possible to find in the history of the race, and even in a slightly different way in the history of nations and individuals, a period in which the *form of self-consciousness* prevails and determines both the consciousness of objects and that of God. In such a period, the interest of life becomes predominantly moral, or at least subjective, and the outward world loses its power over the human spirit. Man begins to rise to a sense of his freedom and of his independence

of the world about him. His mind, his inner life, is now 'his kingdom'; and the self-determined aims of his will, the realisation of his happiness or of his isolated moral destiny, have become all-important to him. He is freed from the superstitious dread of outward things, and begins to take a cool and prosaic view of them, as instruments of his life. But, at the same time also, the poetic halo vanishes from nature. A glory has passed away from the earth, and 'great Pan is dead':

> "From haunted stream or vale,
> Edged with the poplar pale,
> The parting genius is with sighing sent."

The manifestation of the divine is no longer found in nature but in man; and even in man not as a natural existence, but only as a self-conscious, self-determined subject. Man alone is supposed to be made in the image of God, and the image of God in him is purely spiritual and inward. God is therefore conceived as a spiritual will which stands apart from nature, and reveals itself to man mainly in the inner voice of conscience, the 'categorical imperative of duty.' Man's relation to God may, indeed, as in the Jewish religion, be conceived as that of a subject to a monarch before whom he trembles; but even so, he feels that he can obey or refuse to obey. He, like the God he worships, is an independent individual; and, as such, he is conscious of essential separateness from other individuals and even from God. Such an individualistic religion

we find arising, though with many differences of form, among many nations at a certain stage of their culture. The philosophic faith of the Stoic and the other individualist schools that arose in the decay of the religions of the classical peoples is a good example of this kind of subjective religion; and we find a revival of the same spirit, somewhat modified by Christianity, among the Puritans and others of the Protestant sects. In quite modern times it rises to a philosophical form in Kant. But the great religious example of it is the later Judaism, which, as I shall attempt to show in a future lecture, gradually breaks away in the prophets and psalmists from the forms of a national worship, and becomes an inner religion of the individual heart,—thus preparing the way for the universalism of Christianity.

I have said that, as in the earlier forms of religion, the consciousness of God is reduced to the form of the consciousness of an object, so in this stage it is reduced to the form of self-consciousness. In other words, God is conceived as a subject, and, as a subject, He is brought under the limitations, or some of the limitations, of a human individuality. Hence the relation between God and man is represented as, in the first instance, an external and exclusive one. Yet here, as in the other case, the real nature of the relation between the infinite and the finite necessarily reacts against the imperfect form in which it at

first presents itself. How can man, conceived as isolated from God, be free before Him? If he is made in the image of God as a self, he is infinitely removed from Him as a creature; and the awe of the individual for an absolute Being, who is regarded as outside of him yet so oppressively near to him, may deepen till it overshadows all life with the sense of weakness and sin. Acting as "ever," to use the characteristic expression of Milton, "in his Great Taskmaster's eye," his view of life becomes stern and severe; he is burdened with the sense that, when he has done all, he can only be an unprofitable servant. His reverence is tinged with an awe that verges on superstitious terror, and it may easily associate itself with a formal obedience which fears to swerve in the smallest thing from the letter of the law. Yet, with all its defects, this religion marks a great step of advance towards spiritual freedom. It lifts man above the fear of the powers of nature, and purifies him as by fire from the pollutions that so easily mingle with every form of nature-worship. If it narrows his life by the sense of overpowering responsibility, and darkens it with the awe of a 'Searcher of hearts,' it yet gives him a sense of nearness to the Being he worships. And out of this must necessarily spring a longing for closer union with Him, a longing which is inconsistent with a merely negative conception of His relation to man, and which in the long run must give rise to a higher

idea of that relation. For he who fears God, and nothing but God, is not far from the love that casteth out fear.

The third, or final form of consciousness is that in which the object and the self appear, each in its proper form, as distinct yet in essential relation, and, therefore, as subordinated to the consciousness of God, which is recognised as at once the presupposition and as the end of both. Here, for the first time, the religious consciousness takes its true place in relation to the secular consciousness, and God is known in the *true form of His idea.* For, as has been explained in previous lectures, the idea of God is one with the unity which is at once the presupposition, the limit, and the goal of our divided consciousness of the world and of ourselves. Consequently, so long as God is conceived under the form of abstract objectivity or abstract subjectivity, He is not conceived as He is in truth. To know God *as* God, is to know Him as the Being, who is at once the source, the sustaining power, and the end of our spiritual lives. On this idea, however, I shall not here enlarge. I shall only repeat, what I have already said in an earlier lecture, that this is the only form which religion can take for the modern world. It is impossible for any one who has breathed the spirit of modern science, modern literature, and modern ethics to believe in a purely objective God: to worship any power of nature or even any

individualised outward image, such as those of Apollo or Athene. Still less is he able to worship a *multitude* of such images, and so to compensate for the defect of one imperfect form by introducing others to supplement it. His God must be universal; and if he tries to picture Him in an outward form, he will soon find it impossible to rest in any one object, and will repeat in his own experience the dialectic by which Polytheism disappeared in the abstract unity of Pantheism. Again, though our own religion is developed out of Judaism, it is impossible for moderns to recall the attitude of the pure Monotheist, to whom God was only a subject among other subjects, though lifted high above all the rest. We cannot think of the infinite Being as a will which is external to that which it has made. We cannot, indeed, think of Him as external to anything, least of all to the spiritual beings who, as such, 'live and move and have their being in Him.' This idea of the immanence of God underlies the Christian conception; and, if we look below the surface, we can see that it is an idea involved in all modern philosophy and theology. We may reject religion, or we may accept it, but we cannot accept it except in this form; and even where we reject it, the ground of our rejection will generally lie in the difficulties that seem to exist in *this* form of it. Thus Mr. Spencer takes refuge in the unknowable,

just because it seems to him that the conception of a God who is neither purely objective nor purely subjective must be an empty conception. And Comte in like manner, substitutes humanity for God, because he thinks that the conception of an absolute and infinite Being, who is at once the Father of spirits and the unity to which the whole universe must be referred, involves many contradictions, and that, even if it did not do so, it is beyond all possibility of proof or verification. For such reasons they find it impossible to accept that idea, to which Wordsworth points in his well-known lines on "Tintern Abbey," the idea of God as a Being who is above the contrast of subject and object, yet revealed in both, "whose dwelling" is not only "the light of setting suns and the round ocean and the living air," but also the mind of man:

> "A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things."

Such an idea is rejected, in short, because it is 'too good to be true'; either because it is supposed that its elements will not admit of being united without contradiction, or, because we are supposed to be so confined to the phenomenal that we can never verify it.

If, on the other hand, it could be shown that the idea of God as the unity of all knowing and being,

of the inner and the outer life, of the subject and the object, is not really beyond verification; if it could be shown that this idea does not break down in contradiction, but, on the contrary, is the presupposition without which all other ideas must so break down, the principle of unity which holds the intelligible world and the intelligence together; if, finally, it could be shown that this idea, whatever difficulties it may contain, is yet capable of being rationally applied and developed, and, indeed, that every step in our knowledge of the world or of ourselves helps us so to apply and to develop it, then it may be assumed that no one would be willing to set it aside. What is too good to be true, is what everyone would wish to be true; and the assertion that anything is unreal for such a reason involves a kind of discord between our intellectual and moral ideals and the reality of things. I cannot believe that any such discord exists, or at least, that, so far as it exists, it is insoluble; and I have already given some grounds for rejecting that way of reasoning, which leads to the supposition of its existence. In the sequel I hope to give some farther positive proof of the opposite view.

LECTURE EIGHTH.

THE OBJECTIVE FORM OF THE EARLIEST RELIGION.

Gradual Development of Religion—How to explain Anticipations of the Highest Religious Ideas, which appear very early in the History of Religion—What is implied in the Objective Form of Man's Earliest Consciousness, and especially of his Religious Consciousness—Its Sensuous and Materialistic Character—In what sense the Earliest Religion is Anthropomorphic—What is meant by Fetischism—How Imagination gradually Elevates and Idealises the Objects of Worship.

In the last lecture I attempted to carry a step farther the analysis of the idea of development, and to show that it excludes anything like an absolute break between one stage and another. The identity of a being that lives and develops is shown above all in the fact that, though it is continually changing in its whole nature, yet nothing absolutely new is ever introduced into it. This is a point which is very apt to be neglected by men who are themselves the subjects of such development, especially in any important crisis of their intellectual or moral history: perhaps, we may say that it is almost certain to be

neglected by them. Those who live through any revolution which affects the deepest life of man, such, *e.g.* as that which took place at the first preaching of Christianity, or at the Reformation, are apt to exaggerate the violence of the transition which they have experienced, and to think that all old things have passed away, and that all things have become new. Yet the most violent revolution to which human nature can be subjected can never be more than the emergence into light of something that has been growing for a long time beneath the surface; what seems at first an absolute change is never other than the summed up result of a series of variations; and the final touch which makes the elements crystallise into a new form can be regarded as its real cause only by superficial observers. Let me once more point out how this applies to our present subject. Those who describe the beginnings of religion are apt to speak of the religion of savages as a mere brutal terror of powers which are too great for the individual to deal with; and to suppose that, at some definite period or stage, such terror gave way to a real reverence for beings who were conceived as intellectually or morally superior. But a closer view of the facts always discloses that human thoughts and motives are too mixed and complicated to admit of such simple divisions or transitions. The element of superstitious terror does

not cease all at once at a special point. It clings for generations and even for ages to religions which, on the whole, may be described as religions of reverence; and, on the other hand, the element of reverential awe for something higher, greater, better than themselves, tinges even the darkest superstition of mankind, and at times elevates the sacrifices which they make to it to the rank of heroism. And the reason is, that religion is essentially a consciousness of the infinite presupposed in all the divisions of the finite, a consciousness which, however little it be understood by him whom it inspires, however coarse and imperfect the form in which it presents itself, is yet an integral element of man's mind, of which he can no more rid himself than he can get rid of the consciousness of the object or of himself. And the true nature of this idea, as it is implied in the very constitution of our intelligence, continually reacts against the imperfect form in which it is presented. In this way, it is not unnatural that even at the lowest stage of his life man should be visited with occasional glimpses of the highest he can ever attain. The human spirit is one in all its differences, and, in a sense, the whole truth is always present *in* it, if not *to* it. In the consciousness of the simplest and most uncultured individual there are contained all the principles that can be evolved by the wisest philosopher of the

most cultivated time; and even the rudest religious systems have represented in them—though, no doubt, in a shadowy and distorted way—all the elements that enter into the highest Christian worship. As the child often utters words of strange depth and richness of meaning which all the wisdom of manhood finds it difficult to fathom, or raises problems that might puzzle the greatest philosopher; so, among the earliest recorded utterances of men, and in connexion with a general state of intelligence and morality which was very immature and defective, we often discover strange anticipations of the most elevated ethical and religious ideas. The golden rule of Christianity, not to war with evil against evil but to overcome evil with good, is found imprinted on Egyptian monuments of unknown antiquity, and it had been maintained by Chinese moralists before the time of Confucius: it is implied even in the generosity that mingles with the sensuality and cruelty of savages. It is difficult to say when or where we may not find some traces of the ideas of a divine justice and a Father in heaven, crossing and interfering with the coarsest superstitions and the crudest and most materialistic conceptions of supernatural powers. If we are willing to take single utterances of pious feeling, or isolated moral maxims, as evidence of the effective presence of moral and religious ideas, it would not be difficult to construct

a plausible argument for the thesis, that there has been no real progress in morality or religion from the earliest period of recorded history, and that humanity has always possessed, bound up with its consciousness of itself, all the light on these subjects which it is capable of reaching. In fact, it was by evidence like this that Buckle some time ago attempted to prove, that the moral consciousness of man is stationary, and that therefore progress has depended solely on man's increasing knowledge of the laws of nature.

Now I think we should at once avoid both the temptation to explain away these facts, and the temptation to treat them as evidences that man's earliest stage was one of comparatively elevated views of morality and religion, from which the savages have fallen back. Isolated expressions of moral and religious ideas are no evidence of the general level of thought and life of the people among whom they were first uttered; and their preservation in tradition cannot, therefore, be taken as evidence that that people has retrograded from a higher stage. Before we can tell what they prove in any particular case, we need to see what consequences are drawn from them and what place they hold in the consciousness of the people in question, in relation to their other ideas and customs. Taken by themselves, all that such expressions show is that 'a man's a man for a' that,' that humanity lives already in the

most immature, as it maintains itself in the most degraded condition of men. They show that any one who has a human consciousness, and who lives in society with his fellow-men amid all the changes of human life, cannot but occasionally be touched with the mystery, and elevated with the greatness of human destiny. The soul of man even at its worst is a wonderful instrument for the world to play upon; and in the vicissitudes of life, it cannot avoid having its highest chords at times touched, and an occasional note of perfect music drawn from it as by a wandering hand on the strings. The waves of emotion, of hate and love, of triumph and despair, called forth by all the tremendous risks and struggles of mortal existence, are surely sufficient to explain a few anticipations of the highest truth from the lips of the savage or the child, as they are sufficient to explain a casual sympathy with noble thoughts and deeds in the most degraded of men. But the idea of development enables us to understand how these things should be, and should "overcome men like a summer cloud" without 'any special wonder,' without calling for any other explanation than the general identity of the human spirit in all ages. The evidence of a real progress or development, consistent with this general identity, is to be sought, not so much in the appearance of distinctly new elements, of which we find no previous trace, but rather in the change of the relative place

in consciousness of the elements which, in some form or other, are always to be detected there; a change by which what was at first only the casual manifestation of an exalted sensibility becomes raised into the central principle of a new order of thought and life.

Now, in accordance with this view, I endeavoured in the last lecture to reach some general ideas as to the method of the development of man's consciousness, especially in its religious aspect. And I pointed out that there are three stages in that development, stages which are indicated to us by the very form of that consciousness itself, with its leading ideas of the object, of the subject, and of the principle of their unity: or, if we prefer so to put it, of the world, the self, and God. For though we can never separate these terms, yet we can see that, in the order of time, the consciousness of the object must become explicit before the consciousness of self, and the consciousness of self before the consciousness of God. And the consequence of this is that the higher elements of consciousness, those that become explicit later, are forced at first to appear *in the form* of the lower element. Thus the consciousness of self and the consciousness of God are both at first constrained to disguise themselves in a shape which is adequate only to the consciousness of the object; and when the consciousness of self has been freed by the advance of reflexion from this subjection, it still in its turn imposes the imper-

fections of its own form upon the consciousness of God. Hence the consciousness of God passes through a series of changes from less to more adequate forms, and is latest of all in assuming its proper shape. To know God *as God*, without confusing Him with the object or the subject in their abstraction, is the highest and most difficult attainment of the religious consciousness. Nay, we might even say that it is the highest goal of all human development; for, as we have seen, it is the highest result of development to return upon its own principle; and, in the case of man, this means, to become conscious of the unity presupposed in all his divided, finite life. A religion which expresses the consciousness of the infinite in its own form, can alone solve the great problem of doing full justice to the secular consciousness, allowing it all the room that is needful for its complete differentiation, and yet overcoming or reconciling its divisions by carrying them back to the divine unity from which they spring. It alone can 'see all things in God,' without losing a clear consciousness of the order of nature, or of the moral order to which, in the social and political life of man, it is subordinated.

To appreciate exactly the nature of the progress which I have now described in general terms, it will be necessary for us to examine the three stages of it a little more closely. We begin, therefore, by con-

sidering the first of those stages, that in which the idea of the *object* is predominant, and determines the form of all our consciousness.

Man, as I have said, looks outward before he looks inward, and he looks inward before he looks upward. As a consequence, his first consciousness of that which is within as well as of that which is above him, is thrown into the mould of his consciousness of that which is without. All that exists for him in this stage is the outward, the visible, the tangible, the sensible. Into this, indeed, as into all consciousness, the mind brings its own forms of thought and perception; but of these it takes no direct account. It is to it *as if* all objects, and even itself, were purely given from without through the senses to the passive spirit. Hence Hegel called this the sensuous consciousness, not meaning that sensation can fully explain it, but that it does not itself recognise anything else than sense as the source of its knowledge. It is a consciousness for which, so far as it is itself aware, the only connecting links of experience are time and space. Not, of course, that even time and space are by themselves made objects of thought, but that the only unity or connexion yet clearly recognised as existing between things is that they *coexist* in space and *pass through* successive changes in time. For the sensuous consciousness, therefore, the world is a world of pure externality, ostensibly governed only by the least ideal of relations,

the relations of juxtaposition, of coexistence, and of succession; and these are not yet taken as involving any real connexion, but rather the absence of connexion. Things are *beside* each other, events are *after* each other, and nothing seems to be necessarily or vitally related to anything else. All things are taken as isolated individuals, and the causality of any one of them in relation to the others, if thought of at all, is thought of as something arbitrary and accidental. Of course, there is as yet no reflexion on the fact that the subject, as being conscious of all objects, is more than merely one of them. The world is conceived only as an aggregate in which each thing or being has its nature apart from the others, or only liable to casual invasions from them; and the self seems not to stand on any other level than the objects it knows. Still less can reflexion at this stage be expected to rise to any direct conception of the principle of unity between object and subject, as distinct from either, yet binding them both together as one. For such a unity cannot in any way be brought within reach of the sensuous consciousness without at once converting itself into an object which takes its place alongside of other objects of experience. In this primitive consciousness then, it is necessary that everything should be materialised; for, to it existence and materiality are one. No idea can approach it without being transubstantiated into matter. What is to exist for it,

must be felt and seen; hence the *universal* can exist for it, if at all, only in the form of the *particular*. To us, to whom abstraction has become easy, almost fatally easy, who are familiar with the distinction between facts and laws or general principles, and who from childhood have been accustomed to an almost dualistic way of opposing soul and body, ideal and material existence, it is difficult even by the strongest effort of imagination to throw ourselves back into the mental attitude of those whose thoughts so persistently clung to the form of external perception, who so absolutely merged mind in matter, the universal in the particular. The gross materialism of the primitive consciousness, its coarse sensuous realism, its incapacity to rise above immediate appearance, or to grasp a whole except as a collection of parts, make its movements obscure and enigmatic for us; for there is nothing harder than to conceive beings with a mind like our own, yet in which so much is merely potential and latent that is actual and explicit with us. We are alternately tempted to cut the knot, on the one hand, by reducing the savage to an animal, or, on the other hand, by giving him credit for ideas that are altogether beyond his reach. We can escape the fallacies of both views only by a clear realisation of the fact that the human mind is from the beginning moulded by ideas, of which it can become directly conscious only by a slow and gradual process, and which, therefore, *must* in

the first instance present themselves in an inadequate form. We may, to some extent, help ourselves in this difficult task by considering how much our own thought is still dependent on sensuous metaphors, and how great is the risk of its being drawn down to the metaphors it uses. As Selden said that transubstantiation was 'rhetoric turned into logic,' so we may safely assert that much false theory is simply the logical development of the sensuous analogies, under which the truth at first necessarily presented and expressed itself. These analogies are good within certain limits, but when drawn out to all their consequences they become entirely misleading. Their value lies in their general verisimilitude; but when they are literally taken and pressed home, when they are consistently worked out, as if they were identical with the idea they are intended to convey, they *hide*, rather than manifest the truth. Now if, even at a later day, when the distinction of ideal and material has long been familiar, philosophers like Locke have been misled by some of the ordinary metaphors in which the idea of the relation of the mind to its object is conveyed (such as that involved in the word "impression"), and have thereby had their view of that relation distorted, how much more might we expect this to be the case in an earlier time, when men's thoughts were as yet chained to the outward and the sensible, and when they were under the necessity of representing in sensuous pic-

tures everything which they sought to bring before their minds at all. The first stage of thought is inevitably a stage of 'levelling down.' For though men, as men, cannot avoid having in their thought a content which is not sensuous or material, that content must take the form of the consciousness into which it comes. They can and must think of what is not merely outward and physical; but they are obliged, in the first instance, to represent it *as if* it were outward and physical. They are like the members of a rude nation who have none of the precious metals to use for money, and who, if they chance to come into possession of a diamond, are obliged to represent its value in copper. The highest has to be expressed in terms of the lowest—the inward, the ideal, the spiritual, in terms of the outward, the sensuous, the material; and it is only by the slow and persistent reaction of the meaning upon the expression, of the content against the form, that the former liberates itself from the latter.

This assertion may seem to contradict a very common view as to the earliest form of human thought. It has often been maintained that man at first is necessarily *anthropomorphic* in his conception of the world, *i.e.* that he represents all the objects around him as endowed with a nature like his own, and that it is only by the slow process of experience that he comes to recognise that there are many objects which are without

life, more which are without sensation and appetite, and still more which are without reason and will. "Man gazes," says Turgot, "upon the profound ocean of being, but what at first he discerns is not the bed hidden beneath its waters but only the reflexion of his own face." He interprets the objects without, by what he feels and experiences within, and makes their motions and changes intelligible to himself by imputing to them the same kind of motives by which he knows that his own actions are determined.

Now there is an element of truth in this view, but it is misleading, *if taken literally*. In a sense, it may be granted that primitive man, just because he does not distinguish the subject as such from the object, is disposed to transfer to the object feelings and desires like his own; but this confusion must not be taken to imply that he first looks into his own soul, and then interprets what is without on the analogy of what he has already found within. For it is rather the reverse that happens. Man, as I have already said, looks outward before he looks inward, and it may even be said that he can find within only what he has first discovered without. What is meant is only that, while man knows himself only as he knows objects, yet he knows objects only as he finds something of himself in them. For if self-knowledge comes to him only as he is reflected back upon himself from the world, yet knowledge of

the world can never be other than the recognition in it of that which mirrors and reflects the self that knows it. In this sense, all our knowledge is anthropomorphic, even of that which is least like man. For, though nothing in the world reflects perfectly the spirit in man except his fellowman, all things reflect something that is in him, and they are intelligible only because they do so. On the other hand, we know ourselves only through this reflexion; we are conscious of ourselves only as the world comes to self-consciousness in us.

> "Nor doth the eye itself,
> That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,
> Not going from itself; but eye to eye opposed
> Salutes each other with each other's form:
> For speculation turns not to itself,
> Till it hath travelled and is mirrored there
> Where it may see itself."

All our consciousness of the world, in this higher sense, may be said to be anthropomorphic—the reflexion of ourselves from, or the discovery of ourselves in, the objects and beings around us—provided it be at the same time remembered that it is only in and through this reflexion that we come to a consciousness of what we ourselves are. But, in the earliest stage, the picture reflected back to man from the world is one which has no distinction or articulation in it. It is a picture in which all beings and things are, as it were, confused to-

gether; in which there is as yet no distinct division between things organic and things inorganic; or between the different stages of organic being, between life and sensation, or between sensation and consciousness. River and tree, animal and man, are not yet recognised as having any essential difference of nature. We may call this view, in a special sense, anthropomorphic, because it draws up everything to the level on which man seems to stand. But it would be quite as accurate to say that it draws man down to the level of the beings and even the things around him; for, on this stage, he has the same confused view of himself as of the objects around him. All things are gifted with a kind of life, but there is as yet no distinction of kinds; and even life itself is not clearly distinguished from motion.

The point of these observations may be realised more definitely, if we compare the savage animism—that is to say, the savage belief in spirits—with the developed mythology of Greece which really does attempt to anthropomorphise nature, or, in other words, to explain the world by drawing all its powers up to the level of humanity. The savage has no definite idea of the characteristic qualities of man which he could transfer to other things. But in the confusion of his consciousness, for which there is no clear idea of the distinction between intelligence and sense, or even between dead and

living matter, it is natural enough that we find what is dead invested with the qualities of the living, and what is living with those of the dead. It is by thus thinking away the distinctions of later thought that we can come nearest to that which it is all but impossible for us fully to realise, viz., the first consciousness of man, as it is indicated in some of the phenomena of savage life, and of the infancy of the individual. What most perplexes us in attempting such realisation is just the *undistinguishing* character of that consciousness, and the facility with which it passes up and down what is to us the *scala naturae*, without any sense of the lines of division which separate one kind of being from another—lines which to us have come to be so deeply marked. The civilised observer of savages is continually baffled by the distinctness of his own categories of thought; because every idea which he finds them expressing, carries for him all sorts of consequences, and, in particular, all sorts of exclusions, of which they have never thought. And if he has any favourite theory of his own to maintain, he is sure to find some fact to support it amid the chaotic ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματα of the savage mind. For the difficulty is just that we are disposed to stick to one conception at a time, and to work it out consistently, while to the savage all conceptions are,

as it were, *fluid*, and pass into each other without warning. Take this description given by Waitz of the superstitions found among the negro races:—

"The negro carries animism, or the belief that there is soul in nature, to the utmost extreme. But as his understanding is too uncultivated to grasp or retain the conception of one universal animating principle, his imagination is carried by this idea into endless trivialties of superstition, suggested by the particular circumstances of his life. Thus a spirit may be conceived to dwell in any sensible object; and often, indeed, a great and powerful spirit is supposed to take up his habitation in an object which has otherwise no value or significance. The negro does not think of this spirit as unalterably bound up with the material thing in which it dwells, but only as having its usual or chief abode there. Not seldom he separates in his thought between the spirit and the sensible thing of which it has taken possession, sometimes even he opposes them to each other. Usually, however, he combines them as forming one whole, and this whole constitutes what Europeans call his 'fetisch,' the object of his religious veneration.

"On this view, it is not difficult to see what is meant by the fetischism of the negroes. On the one hand, the fetisches are a kind of gods, though only inferior or half-gods; for they create nothing,

but rather themselves are constantly in need of a material body. On the other hand, they are for the most part nothing better than the commonest sensible things, which, however, are believed to possess supernatural powers; they are supposed to be sacred to some higher being, to be his favourite abode, or in some way or other to be brought into a closer relation with him than is the case with other things. All these conceptions remain undistinguished from each other in the consciousness of the negro. The fetisch is the god himself and yet at the same time some object consecrated to him or possessed by him (in both senses of the word), it may be a tree, an animal, a pot, an offering, a place of offering, an inspired priest or seer, a temple; it is at once thought of as the god himself, and as something upon which he has bestowed miraculous powers, a medicine, an amulet, a lucky or unlucky day, a prohibited food, or a poison used as an ordeal. The so-called 'medicine' of the natives of America, the Taou of the South Sea Islanders, are substantially identical in conception with the Mokisso of Congo and the Fetisch of the negro. In all these cases we find the same confusion of religious ideas, the same obscure transitions of thought by which all conceptions of the divine flow together into one. And the low stage of religious culture at which the negroes stand is shown far less by the fact that

they pay veneration to particular sensible objects than by this inextricable mixture of different elements in their thoughts of deity."[1]

This passage relates to the religious conceptions of a particular class of savages, but we may take it as an expression of the general point of view of the sensuous consciousness.[2] It is, indeed, just what we might expect, if it be true that, in the first instance, man looks outward rather than inward, and, that in doing so, he makes no clear distinction between the different grades of being. For, as a necessary consequence of this, the form into which everything tends to be forced is that which is most external and materialistic. At this stage immediate sensuous realisation is necessary for everything that is to be regarded as real at all; and it is only because the boundaries of the natural world are yet supposed to be so elastic that room can be made in it for any reality which is not sensuous. No doubt, the reaction of the non-sensuous content against the form in which it has to be expressed is seen in the strange mingling of high and low, spiritual and material, which so much confuses and perplexes us in the uncivilised thought; but

[1] Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, ii. 174.

[2] I do not, however, maintain that fetischism is the beginning of religion except in the very wide sense explained in this lecture.

this reaction is as yet only sufficient to confuse the man's consciousness of the lower kind of reality, but not to separate the higher from it.

This, however, leads me to observe, that, as the savage is after all a rational being, it cannot but be that, in some form or other, the elements that belong to a rational consciousness should present themselves to him. Not only is it the case that the objects presented to him in the outward world are at different stages in the scale of being, and that therefore the experience of them is ever reacting against the levelling individualism of his first consciousness; but we have to remember that the savage always *is* more than he *knows*. As he is a rational being, his thought is ruled by categories on which he has never reflected, but which nevertheless express themselves in the very structure of his language. He could not know objects as in space and time, if he were himself *merely* an object in space and time. He could not go out of himself and rise to a point of view from which he regards himself as one individual existing along with other individuals as parts of the same world, unless there were present in his consciousness, as an element of its very constitution, the idea of an absolute unity which embraces all differences and grades of being. As we have already sufficiently shown, the division of the self from the not-self, and the unity that transcends that division, are involved in

the simplest perceptive determination of objects; and all these elements must in some way be present to every conscious being, if not directly, yet in some influence which they exert on his consciousness,—either by transforming its objects or by introducing among them objects which otherwise would not exist for it at all. The confusion of the primitive consciousness, therefore, lies not merely in the fact that the grades of external being are imperfectly distinguished from each other, but in *this*:—that the inchoate consciousness of self and of God which goes with every consciousness of objects, tends to break down the limits of finite reality by the intrusion of a reality of a different order. Yet, on the other hand, this higher reality is forced by the necessity of the case to mask its true nature under a disguise which disfigures it.

This may become clearer if we look at it in a slightly different point of view. We have seen that the religious consciousness is posterior in genesis to the consciousness of objects and the consciousness of self, though it refers to a principle of unity which is presupposed in both. Further, we have seen that whenever the consciousness of self and of the object becomes fixed and definite, the consciousness of God rises in opposition to them, and, it might even be said, as their negation. This was the element of truth which we found in Mr. Spencer's view of

religion. Religion was thus described as arising from a perception of the unreality of the finite, which itself implies or leads to a perception of the reality of the infinite. Discerning the transitoriness, the shifting and uncertainty, the imperfection and illusion, of the phenomenal world, such as it is to the eyes of sense and understanding, we are by that very consciousness carried beyond it to that which is eternal and absolutely real. Thus by a negative movement, we seem to rise from the finite to God, seeking in Him that which we at first sought in the world or in ourselves, but which we were able to find in neither. Now, though this view does in the main represent truly the logic of religion, it is a logic which cannot be distinctly discerned in the earliest forms of it. For it presupposes a more definite idea of the finite than we can find there. When the secular consciousness, the consciousness of the world as a connected system of objects going through definite and related changes, becomes clearly defined, the religious recoil from such a world of time and change must inevitably follow. But, in the first instance, there is no definite secular consciousness to rise above, and, therefore, no clear distinction of the religious consciousness from it. What we have at first is rather a confused consciousness of things, which we can neither call distinctly religious nor distinctly secular, still less a reconciliation of the

two; for such a reconciliation presupposes that the secular or the religious have been first divided from and opposed to each other. The divine is not yet sought for in that which is higher than any or all objects, though manifested in them. Nevertheless, the trace of the opposition may be found in the fact that, while the idea of divinity, so far as it is yet attained, tends to attach itself to some finite object, it is at first connected rather with the objects which are farthest from man than with those that are nearest to him. It is rather a stone or a mountain, a plant or an animal, that is at first deified, than a man; though in the confused stage of thought which is characteristic of the savage, the limits of different existences are not preserved, and the wildest and most absurd metamorphoses are readily admitted. I shall not here, however, attempt to give any classification of savage beliefs or superstitions, or to exhibit the order in which they arise out of each other; for what I wish at present is only, in the first place, to throw some light upon the characteristic *form* which such primitive beliefs have taken as the deification of particular objects of sense; and, in the second place, to show how the inner movement of the religious consciousness must gradually alter and finally do away with that form or way of representing the divine.

If man is a 'mean thing,' unless he can 'exalt himself above himself,' still more truly we may say

that he is a mean thing, if he cannot exalt himself above the finite objects he sees and handles. The development of man's higher life is dependent upon two things: in the first place, on the *separation* of the secular and the religious consciousness, and, in the second place, on their *reunion.* For it is only by that separation that either consciousness can take a definite form, and it is only by their reunion that the religious can be made the means of elevating the secular consciousness. But, for the savage, the divine takes and must take the form of finite objectivity, because that is the only form in which reality can as yet be presented to him; and the farther we go back in development, the less do we find the object or objects selected for worship distinguished in any way from other objects, or at least distinguished in any way that really lifts them above the rest. If the being or thing, to which mysterious reverence is paid, stands out in separation from other things and beings, it seems to be only as having a somewhat greater or at least less measurable power, but not as possessing any excellence which is essentially different in kind. It, or he, (for at this stage it is difficult to draw the line between the two pronouns) does not seem to be regarded as in any way nobler or purer than his worshippers, or as setting up any ideal for them to follow; but only as having somewhat

more favour for them than for others. Hence the partial truth of Goethe's description of early religion as 'fear without reverence.' We must not, indeed, transfer the demands of a higher morality to those early times, and say that there was nothing for the savage to look up to in a god upon whom we necessarily look down. But even making all allowances, it is often difficult to detect, in the character of the deities worshipped by uncivilised peoples, the grounds for that element of reverence which must be present as a saving salt in any religion that binds men together. 'If,' we are disposed to say, 'men bowed down to such monsters, it must have been merely from terror, and not because they found in them a higher self to aid them in their war against their own fears and passions. If they worshipped, it must have been to secure the god as an ally in averting danger and accomplishing their own wishes, and not because they wished to dedicate themselves to his service. It was a worship of slaves who sought to propitiate or flatter a being, for whom in himself they cared nothing, or whom they secretly hated; and not a surrender of will to a guardian and guide who set before them a higher end than their own caprice.' And it might be added that a further evidence of the degraded character of such superstitious worships is to be found in the fact, that the abject terror of

the savage easily changes into presumption; and the prayer and sacrifice, by which he tries to enlist supernatural powers on his side, into the magic or witchcraft, by which he seeks to master or control them. The savage would, if he could, get the better of his god, and reduce him to the condition of the 'gyns' of the *Arabian Nights*, who are obliged to serve the possessor of some magic lamp or ring. Thus the god, at a turn of the hand, converts himself into a fetisch or a spirit subjected to a fetisch. For the essential point of what is called fetischism, if we use that name for any general phenomenon of religion, is just this, that the worshipper has no thought of really devoting himself to ends which are represented as belonging to his god, but desires only, by propitiation if propitiation is necessary, by magic if magic will avail—either, in other words, by begging and bribing or by fraud and force—to use the god for his own purposes. In this sense the spirit of fetischism is the dark shadow which accompanies religion in every stage, from the savage who makes presents to the medicine man of his tribe up to the Christian, who prays, not that God's will may be done but that God may be got to do his will.

Now, I shall not here inquire whether there is any religion, savage or civilised, in which this element is the whole, and in which, therefore, the god is *merely* an object of selfish fear or hope, and not identified

with any cause or aim to which the individual is willing, or at least is called upon, to devote himself. But I maintain that, just so far as the god is conceived as a mere object among other objects, standing on the same level with them, and external both to them and to their worshippers, these are the only feelings which he can inspire. On the other hand, just so far as the divine object is raised above other objects, and conceived as the representative of some general social aim—as the permanent centre round which the life of the tribe or the family or the nation revolves—just so far will fear be changed into reverence and selfish hope into self-devotion. But if this change takes place, the object worshipped will *ipso facto* become idealised, *i.e.* it will be filled with a meaning which does not belong to it *as a particular object:* it will be lifted out of the rank of other finite existences, and will have a higher value attributed to it. Hence the form of it, as a particular object, will be partially set aside whenever it comes into collision with the function thus ascribed to it. In other words, the form of objectivity which is necessary to the religious consciousness in this stage of its development, will be constrained to carry a content, which properly could only be given to that which is above all finite objects. It will be treated as the embodiment of a universal principle. On the other hand, in so far as the form *masters* the content or limits it, the worship will

necessarily degenerate into a degrading superstition which does not deserve the name of religion.

Now I wish, in the meantime, to postpone the consideration of the special nature of the objects worshipped, and to look merely at the general form of objectivity common to all such religions. To represent God as a mere object is, as we have seen, to express the divine in an inadequate form, in a form that, at least, cannot be made *fully* adequate to the idea; for the principle of unity in all objects and subjects cannot be properly represented as one object among others. But, at the same time, it is also true that in some sense the whole is involved in every part of the universe, and therefore any part of it may for a time be taken as a type of the whole. Hence in that early time when a universal principle cannot for itself be realised in thought—when nothing, indeed, can be brought within the reach of the mind, unless it be pictured as an external object—it is of the highest importance that the object selected, be it what it may, should be lifted above other objects, and freed from the limitations that belong to objectivity. When the spiritual cannot yet be separated from the natural, it is of the highest importance that the natural object which represents the spiritual should be, as it were, transfigured by the imagination, so that it may, so far as possible, symbolically take the place of the spiritual. For the

first deliverance of man from the sensuous consciousness is necessarily the *imaginative* deliverance, by which the general form of that consciousness is not changed, but by which, nevertheless, it is made the vehicle of a meaning that does not properly belong to it.

Now this process of transfiguration of the sensuous consciousness and its objects, this struggle of the spiritual to express itself through the natural, begins with the dawn of religion; and it goes on continuously till it produces the highest poetic or imaginative representation of the divine, the highest representation of the divine which is possible in a merely sensuous or natural form. It then turns away from the naturalistic or objective form altogether; the attempt to represent the god as an external object is abandoned, and a subjective religion of thought takes its place. Thus the wine of spirit at first fills the bottles of sense and then destroys them: imagination first elevates the outward in order to make it a fit expression of the inward meaning, and then, as the meaning still grows, it casts away the outward altogether, and proclaims its inadequacy. It is this process which in rapid outline we have to analyse.

The savage consciousness, the consciousness of uncivilised man, is rarely *poetical*, though it cannot be said that it is *prosaic*. It is lawless and arbitrary

without being free. When it gets beyond the coarsest sensuous realism, it wanders without a rein, distorting the simplest natural facts, confusing the shapes of all things, and satisfying itself with the crudest and most inconsistent hypotheses. Where there is no proper *nature*, there can be no proper supernatural; and the vague sense of something higher than himself, and higher than those nearest objects which alone he comprehends, may attach to anything and wander from it to anything else. Thus in the lowest stage of civilisation, it seems often to be a mere chance that directs the feeling of reverence to one thing rather than others, or brings one object rather than another into close connexion with the religious life of a tribe. Going a step higher, we find the beginnings of a poetic mythology connected with the selection and idealisation of special classes of objects. The universal does not yet separate itself as an object of thought from the particular, but objects are selected which have some special significance or suggestiveness; or, in other words, they are selected for their aesthetic qualities—like the spotless animals which were consecrated in Egypt. A farther step is indicated by the Sphinxes of Egypt, and the composite animals of Assyrian art, in which new combinations are invented to express the growing consciousness of a mystery which is not felt to be adequately symbolised by any natural shape or form. The savage stories, full of

coarseness and childishness, which served in the infancy of man to express his first ideas as to the nature of things, and which show little more than that he had early become aware that there was an enigma in the world to be solved, are gradually softened and refined. Recent researches in mythology have led us to recognise the long struggle by which the poetic imagination gradually triumphed over this crude material. For they have shown that under the highest and most beautiful myths of India or Greece there are to be discovered traces of absurd and almost brutal legends, similar to those which are still found among the savage tribes of Africa or Polynesia. Such discoveries have been regarded as involving something that is degrading to religion and to human nature; but this is a one-sided view of them. They may destroy some idyllic pictures of the earliest state of man or of particular races. But they are anything but discouraging, when we consider the light which they throw on human progress, the evidence they give of the slow but irresistible effort, continued through generation after generation and century after century, whereby man triumphs over the animal within him and makes it the servant of the spirit. They show, indeed, that the consciousness of a divine power is bound up with his very life, and that, even in his earliest and most childish stage, he is compelled to express it in some simple, and, we may admit, some

coarsely sensuous way. But they show farther that, this expression being reached, he does not long remain satisfied with it, but is continually reacting upon it, changing and remoulding it by new efforts of imagination and thought. Thus, in spite of many a failure and many a recoil, man is on the whole steadily advancing toward a fuller and clearer manifestation of the idea, by which he never ceases to be haunted. The lower and cruder we conceive man's first thoughts to have been, the coarser the earthen vessel into which he has at first to put the treasure of his spiritual life, the more powerful becomes the witness of his development to the might of the spiritual principle which urges him forward in his unhasting, unresting course. The worst that can be said of human nature we know already, apart altogether from the teaching of history; for we know that the raw materials out of which the web of our life is woven are the sensations and appetites of the animal. And we know that the struggle of the awaking spirit with those sensations and appetites is enough to explain any amount of confusion and sensual disturbance in the earliest stages of human existence. But the turbidity of the waters only proves that the angel has come down to trouble them, and the important thing is that when so disturbed they have a healing virtue. The significant fact in regard to human history is, *not* what man

begins with—for, as a developing being, he must begin with his lowest, the lowest that is possible to a spiritual being in its first immersion in sense—but what he ends with: how, by continual reaction on the product of his first endeavours to manifest and realise what is in him, he turns it into a more and more adequate expression, and so rises on stepping stones of his dead self to higher things. The religious consciousness finds at once the exhibition of its nature and the proof of its validity in the very history of its own transformations.

LECTURE NINTH.

CONNEXION OF RELIGION IN ITS EARLIEST PHASES WITH MORALITY.

Relation of Religion and Morality—That Objective Religion conceives God as a Father—In what Sense the Earliest Religion is Ancestor-Worship—The Opposition of Gods and Demons—Social Character of Early Religion and Morality—The Development of Objective Religion—(1) *The Growth of Polytheism and the Effort to reduce the Many Gods to One—Henotheism*—(2) *Importance of the Stage in which the Heavens or Heavenly Bodies came to be worshipped—The Vedic Religion—Why it ends in Pantheism.*

In the last lecture, I showed that religion in its first expression must necessarily take the form of the sensuous consciousness; *i.e.* that the god or gods who are worshipped must be represented as mere objects, existing among other objects and on the same terms with them. And I went on to point out how this objective form of the first religious consciousness is in conflict with the fundamental idea of religion, and how this conflict leads to a progressive improvement of that form itself. In this stage it is impossible

for man to escape from the bonds of sense. He is obliged to represent his god as an external object of perception. But, consistently with this general mode of thought, it is possible for the imagination gradually to elevate the object worshipped above other objects, and to give it a completeness and independence, an ideal perfection, which makes it a fitter representative of the divine. It is the essential function of art and poetry to subserve in this way the higher education of man, by teaching us to see the universal in the form of the particular; or, in other words, to make particular objects represent to us something that is not really identified with their limited existence. The painter has done nothing, unless he has shown us not merely the photographic lineaments of that which he presents to us, but also the beauty that "never was on land or sea"; and the poet has done nothing, unless he has made his theme the vehicle of a meaning which is not confined to the theme itself, but connects it with ideas, or at least with emotions, which are universal. Hence the agency of art and poetry is just what is needed to meet the wants of the religious mind in its earliest stage, when it is as yet confined to the objective way of thinking, and is obliged to find room for all it would express in this inadequate form.

But before following out this line of thought any

farther, we must turn to another aspect of religion. Religion is not only a theoretical consciousness, but is always intimately connected with the practical life of man. For, as we have seen, it is always the consciousness, in some more or less adequate form, of a divine power as the principle of unity in a world, of which *we* are not only spectators but parts. Indeed, the presence of this unity as an element or presupposition of our consciousness is the only reason of man's being religious at all. The idea of it, therefore, not only controls our view of objects in their relations to each other, but also our view of their relations to ourselves, and of our relations to them; and the most important of all the objects to which we stand in relation are our fellowmen, especially those who are members of the same society. If it is through the objective world, the not-self, that we are conscious of the self, and if it is through the double relation of each to the other that we are conscious of God, yet we must not regard all objects as equally concerned in the development of this higher consciousness. It is not in collision with stones and trees and animals that the light of intelligence and the consciousness of a separate individuality is kindled. It is the tension of conflict with another self that awakes the joy of independent selfhood and the pain of a finite divided life. "Iron sharpeneth iron: so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his neighbour." But also "as in

water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." The same cause which makes keen the sense of division and antagonism, also gives rise to a perception of the need of union, and to the consciousness of the existence of a principle of unity, which is deeper than the division and can overcome it. Thus our consciousness of self is predominantly a consciousness of our distinction from and relation to other men, and our consciousness of God is developed mainly in connexion with this distinction and relation. To take a religious view of life therefore, is, not only to see a divine agency in the world: it is to recognise that agency as a power which, in lifting us above ourselves, unites us to other individuals and them to us. Religion is the acknowledgment of a principle, in uniting himself to which, man is at the same time brought into alliance not only with nature but also with his fellowmen. And, though at first it is rather in *nature* than in *human nature* that the form is sought under which this divine principle is expressed or represented, yet this does not prevent the being so worshipped from being regarded above all as a principle of unity in the social organism. Man's relation to God is inevitably conceived as the ground of a social relation between himself and other beings like himself, which determines at once *their* practical obligations to *him* and *his* practical obligations to *them*.

In this sense, then, we may say that, as is a man's religion, so is his morality. As he conceives of his relation to the power which determines his place in the world—and especially his place in relation to other men who with him are the members of one society—so also he conceives of the duty which he owes to them. Those who have denied that in early times religion had anything to do with morality, really meant that it does not produce what *we* call moral conduct. And to this it is sufficient to answer that their religion is not what we call religion. But it would be absurd to say that at any time man's relation to the beings he conceived as divine has not had a determining influence on his view of his relations to his fellow-men, and of the conduct therefore incumbent on him. And this would least of all be true of the earliest period of human history. Perhaps we might even go farther and say that, then and always, religion and morality are necessary correlates of each other, and that it is impossible to elevate one of them without also elevating the other. Of these reciprocal influences it would not be difficult to find many proofs, but we must confine ourselves to one or two salient points.

In the first place, I may refer to one very important effect on the conception of man's social relations, which is produced by the objective form

of our first religious consciousness. In the absence of special counteracting causes, the fact that the god who is the principle of unity in a society, is conceived as an *object*, carries with it the consequence that the connexion of the members of that society with each other and with their god is conceived as an external and natural connexion. And, conversely, if the social bond be regarded as merely based on natural relationship, the god who is the principle of unity in the society will be represented as an external object, a merely natural existence. In other words, if the religion be naturalistic and objective, the morality will necessarily take the same form, and the social bond will be represented as simply the tie of common blood. And, on the other hand, if the sense of moral obligation does not separate itself from, or reach beyond, the natural ties of kindred, the god who is the principle of unity manifesting itself in that bond of union, will necessarily be represented in some merely natural form, and the connexion of his worshippers with him will be regarded as one of actual physical descent.

It is, therefore, only what we might expect that in early times such descent should be taken as the limit of the social bond, within which alone any duties to others are acknowledged; and that the god who preserves and sanctifies the bond of kin-

ship should be regarded as the ancestor of all who partake in it. This, however, does not imply that, as Mr. Spencer among others has maintained, the beginning of religion was in *ancestor-worship;* for this would involve that the god worshipped was always, in the first instance, a human being. Now, under the system of Totemism, which is at least *one* of the earliest forms of social union, we find that the god is an animal, a plant, or, indeed, almost anything rather than a man. And, though a kind of anthropomorphism appears very early—because the sense of the distinction of different grades of being is very weak—yet a clear selection of the form of man as that which is primarily or exclusively divine, comes very late. The consciousness of the opposition between the finite and the infinite first betrays itself in the tendency to seek God in that which is far off from humanity, rather than in that which is nearest to it. And anthropomorphism in its full development is found only where, as in Greece, the human mind is on the point of turning away from all objective forms to seek deity in the subjective. While, therefore, I do not deny that ancestor-worship appears among the earliest forms of religion, yet I am inclined to think that, in the majority of cases at least, it is not that the being worshipped is conceived by his worshippers as a god because he is an ancestor, but rather

that he is conceived as an ancestor because he is believed to be their god. For the god is yet represented as a mere object, and the only way in which men can as yet think of an objective power, which is not themselves, as being friendly to them, is by supposing it to be of their own blood. In this way the god cannot be brought near to his worshipper, except by regarding him as a father or remoter ancestor who is still watching over his family. The difficulties of thinking of a plant or an animal as the progenitor of a race of men are disregarded, difficulties of course not very great to those who have as yet no firm hold of the conception of law, and who are ready to believe that anything may come from anything. This is the only rational way in which we can explain how plants and animals, rocks and rivers, and what not, should be at once worshipped as gods and represented as ancestors, while the explanations of those who make ancestor-worship the basis of all religion, are necessarily entangled in all the difficulties of Euhemerism.[1] On the other hand, as it is the simplest fact of morals that the natural tie of blood is the form under which

[1] Cf. *Principles of Sociology*, Vol. I. Part I. Chap. 22 *seq.* See especially §§ 170-171, where Mr. Spencer tells us that the animal names given to gods, such as wolf, fox, and the like, were originally nicknames given to the illustrious forefathers of the race, because of their ferocity, cunning, or other prominent characteristics.

the consciousness of spiritual relation between man and man first develops and matures itself, so it is only the other aspect of that fact that religion, as the consciousness of the spiritual basis of unity which expresses itself in such relations, should take the form of filial piety. And this holds good even of a time when the idea of humanising the gods, or of recognising humanity as essentially kindred with divinity, is as yet far off.

If these remarks have any truth, they may enable us to realise two points that are of no little importance in the history of religion. In the first place, we can see how it is that in all religious Particularism, *i.e.* in all systems of religion in which the god is identified with a particular object in the natural world, and is conceived as the head or father of a particular clan or kinship or nation, we have a polytheism or plurality of gods, at least in the sense that the family, tribe, or nation, while it worships its own god, does not deny the existence of other gods[1] who preside over other families or nations. In the second place, we are enabled to understand why, under these conditions, religion and morality stand on the one side contrasted with, but easily passing into, superstition and immorality on the other. For, at

[1] Judges xi. 24: "Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the Lord our God hath dispossessed before us, them will we possess."

this stage, morality simply means the solidarity of the little society, as expressing itself in the faithfulness of its members to each other; and religion means simply their loyalty and devotion to the friendly power, which is represented as the forefather of the family or kinship. But the society, or kinship, is surrounded by other similar societies which are unfriendly to it, and serve other gods. Every victory of his own society thus becomes to the member of it a victory of *his* god, and every defeat a victory of other gods. And, as at this stage he can scarcely conceive of the difference between good and evil powers, except as the difference between a power that is friendly and one that is adverse to the society with which all his life is identified, so it may be said that the gods of other societies are his demons, and that his god is a demon to them. Thus the war of good and evil is for him a war at once in heaven and in earth, a conflict of natural and also of supernatural powers. And a blow at the existence of the kinship or tribe to which he belongs is for him a victory won by the powers of evil over the powers of good; or, in other words, a victory won by superstition and immorality over religion and morality. If the circle of beings with whom nature and custom have made him one—the little friendly world in which he has moved and had his being, to which all his higher life is attached, which has been continually working for him, as he has been

working for it—be broken up, he becomes an outcast without rights and without duties, and his gods have been dethroned by hostile supernatural powers which he must now seek somehow to evade or appease. As Homer says, he is *ἀφρήτωρ, ἀθέμιστος, ἀνέστιος*, without kin, without law, without a hearth on which he can burn incense to the gods of his fathers. He is cut off at once from the charities of heaven and those of earth; and his unprotected state, as it leaves him open to the constant fear of outrage from men, so it makes him ready to crouch in slavish terror at any appearance which he can regard as the threat of an angry god. On the other hand, any tribal triumph or deliverance becomes to him the sign that his god is stronger than other gods, and at the same time knits him in closer union to the kinship that has thus received the blessing of heaven. The sense of the privilege and honour of belonging to such a society, and of the duty of living for it, becomes strengthened, and he conceives of the gods of his conquered foes as only defeated demons, who can do nothing against him. The consciousness of belonging to a victorious race brings with it a growing sense of personal dignity and increased readiness to sacrifice himself for the life of the community which is the source of his pride. And this pride is at the same time purified and elevated by the conviction that in serving the community he is serving his god. Thus religion and

morality, the consciousness of solidarity with the community and the consciousness of unity with the god whom he worships, combine to redeem his life from the fear of unfriendly powers, natural or supernatural, and to educate him to that higher fear or reverence which is the 'beginning of wisdom.'

It appears then that religion combines itself with a distinct morality and so disengages itself from superstition, just in so far as in it the alliance of the members of a kinship with each other is consecrated by their alliance with a divine being who is conceived as at once their god and their father. Farther, as this divine being is often, if not always, represented as some natural existence other than man, the alliance between man and man is also an alliance between man and nature, or at least some part of nature.[1] And both alliances are conceived on the only type then comprehensible, *i.e.* on the type of blood relationship. Such an alliance raises a man above his natural self, by making him regard himself solely, or at least mainly, as the member of a society, devotion to the service of which is also devotion to God. Outside of this circle he finds only hostile or indifferent powers, and in the case of defeat or disaster to the society, his religion sinks into *spirit-scaring* and magic. Indeed, if we go back to the earliest stage—if that stage was anything

[1] Cf. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, First Series, p. 117 *seq.*

like what we find among the lowest savages—the division between religion and superstition is very uncertain and fluctuating; and, as a consequence or necessary correlate of this, the social bond is only strong enough to save life from being what Hobbes called it, a 'war of all against all.' But, on the other hand, as we nowhere find an entire absence of social unity, so we nowhere find a mere *demon-worship*, in which there is no being worthy to be regarded as a god, no favouring power which can be reverenced as well as feared. Of course the line is not easy to draw; for, with the savage, the consciousness of the friendliness of the god is imperfect and easily disturbed. His own ferocity constantly tends to turn the object of his worship into a cruel and arbitrary being, whose favour can be won only by dreadful sacrifices and propitiations. On the other hand, the god, just because he is a natural object, or the personification of a class of such objects, is still partly a fetisch,—if we may use the word fetischism to indicate that the being worshipped is still regarded merely as one finite thing or object among others. And, just so far as this is the case—so far as the object is not lifted by imagination out of the ranks of other objects, so that practically it ceases to be treated as a mere object—the fear of it and the hope of favour from it cannot pass into a real religious reverence and devotion.

At the same time, while it is hard to detect the

early steps of the process by which light and darkness, religion and superstition, morality and immorality, are first separated, we can see that from the beginning the advance is in the direction already indicated. Religion at first grows and develops in close connexion with social morality. At a later time there may, indeed, arise an individualistic morality, a morality which does not, directly at least, rest on the sense of community with others; and also a religion which connects itself with a moral ideal which is purely subjective: we shall have in the sequel to consider more closely what is the origin and nature of such morality and religion. But in an earlier age it may safely be said that morality must base itself upon the consciousness that man as an individual is only the organ and servant of some narrower or wider community,—be it the community of family, of tribe, or of nation; and upon the readiness of the individual to act in the spirit of this belief, and to surrender his individual interests, not indeed to the egoism of others, but to the greater ego of the community. And such morality has always gone with a corresponding religion; for the greater ego, to the service of which life was devoted, was always conceived as having an existence not merely in the changing collection of individual beings, who at any time constituted, so to speak, the *body* of the community, but in an ideal and divine being who was its

soul. Thus the worship of a family god consecrated the life of the family as something for which the individuals, who in successive generations made up the family, had to live and die, and from which they derived all the worth and dignity of their individual lives. The theory of existence, so to speak, was that one life flowed out from one centre in the god, who was the head and original parent of the family; that it manifested itself in the family as one body, all whose members were continually nourished from the one divine source of its life; and that it was ever flowing back to that source in the failing and death of the individual members, only to reappear in the new generation that took their place. The importance attributed in early times to the persistence of the family or the gens in new representatives, who should keep up the domestic or gentile *sacra*, so that there should always be 'a seed to serve' the god of the kinship, shows how closely these ideas hung together: the ideas of the solidarity of the kinship, of the subordination of the life of the individual to its life, and of the common worship of a god who was the permanent centre round which it revolved and in whose name it fought and conquered. Such devotion to the community in the earliest times was made somewhat easier by the very narrowness of the little society, by the instant necessity for union as the condition without which neither it nor its members

could survive, and by the consequent impossibility of individual interests entering into an effective rivalry with those that were common. Under this state of things it was not so much that the independence of the individuals was suppressed, as that it never got time or opportunity to develop itself. The society was socialistic, not because of the self-surrender of its members, but because its members had not yet acquired any sense of a right and honour belonging to them as separate persons. Hence the only danger to the unity of the society lay in the caprices and passions of the natural man, a danger which all the influences of custom, tradition, and religion were employed to counteract; and which they could counteract the more easily that no moral idea or sense of right was enlisted on the other side. If individuals at this stage resisted social pressure, it was not in the name of any individual right which they conceived themselves to possess. The defective differentiation of early society was thus one of the safeguards of its unity. But, at the same time, it lowered the character of the social unity, the necessity of which was not yet mediated by the freedom of its members; for there can be no altruism in any high sense where there is so little room left for egoism, and to be truly unselfish man must know in all the fulness of its meaning what it is to be a self. And the defectiveness of the moral bond of man to

man in such a society of course carries with it an equally defective stage of religion; for where man is not free in relation to man, there he cannot stand in a spiritual relation to God.

From this it follows that the natural bond of the family or kinship must separate itself from, and subordinate itself to, the comparatively artificial and ideal bond of the state, whose unity lies in the laws on which it is based, ere we can have, in the full sense of the word, a *spiritual* morality and religion. Yet, at the same time, in spite of this defect, the family is not only the first society but the type of all society; for it is the true socialistic community, in which the differences of individuals are dissolved, and egoism and altruism are, as it were, identified by affection. And, for similar reasons, it may fairly be said that in the earliest society, in which the tie of blood is the fundamental basis, and in which that tie is conceived as uniting the members at once to each other and to their God, we find a prefigurement or anticipation of the highest kind of community to which man can rise, —a community of man with man in the service of a God who finds his highest manifestation just in this community, a kingdom of this world which is also a kingdom of heaven. Without, however, looking forward so far, we may observe that it is this same principle,—showing itself on a wider scale, and supplemented by other principles of which we cannot yet

speak—which we see manifesting itself in the civic and religious life of Greece. Thus it was the ideal unity of the Athenian state, as worshipped in the goddess Athene, which held all the citizens together in one community in the present, and bound the present of Athens to the past and the future. And in spite of the wide division which, as we shall see, separates the religion and morality of Israel from those of other nations, it was undoubtedly, in the first instance, connected with the idealisation of a domestic and tribal unity, which expressed itself in the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and which united all the members of the nation together by binding them to one Lord. In short, whatever more we may find in these later and more developed religions, we invariably discover this primitive type at the bottom; a type in which an organised social life, with a tradition of the past and a hope for the future, is based on, and sustained by, faith in a divine principle, which is at once a power over nature and the abiding centre of the changeful life of man.

This is the general type of religion to which almost all the religions of the ancient world may be referred, though it is no doubt variously modified in different ages and nations. In the history of its development two points seem especially to deserve notice: on the one hand, the growth of polytheism, and, on the other hand, the effort to recover the divine unity either by

generalisation or by a monarchical subordination of gods. It does not seem to be the case that the earliest religion is distinctly polytheistic, nor that it is distinctly monotheistic. As the god is then necessarily conceived as an object among other objects, though of a higher character than belongs to them, so the idea of his existence does not exclude the existence of other gods. Nay, we might even say it implies it, since the god is represented as the head of a little kinship, which stands in a relation, sometimes friendly but generally hostile, to other similarly organised kinships. Again, it was inevitable that in course of time a process of aggregation and segregation of such social units should take place. Kinships which formerly had only a small number of members, and which, therefore, were held together by the strongest inward and outward necessity, grew into larger groups of families or tribes which had no such intense feeling of solidarity. And every such partial division tended to give rise to some difference of worship. Or again, in the struggle for existence, social units which formerly were separate, were forced into unity by conquest, or by the necessity of resisting a common enemy; and the different gods which had been worshipped by the different sections came to be treated as concurrent powers, which divided the divine authority between them. Again, as men's ideas of nature widened, there was a tendency to supplement the deficiency of a god who represented one department

or aspect of nature, by introducing other gods who represented other departments or aspects of it. The same impulse which at a later time led to a multiplication of the attributes or names of the divinity, at an earlier stage was satisfied in a simpler way by the multiplication of divinities themselves. The facility with which, under this phase of thought, men were ready to increase the number of their gods, cannot easily be understood by those with whom, as with us, monotheism has dried up the springs of mythology. But a book like Sir Alfred Lyall's *Asiatic Studies* vividly brings before us the fact that there are still many races in that stage of development when any new circumstance, event, or person, may become the occasion for the apotheosis of a new divinity. Half conscious that what he is seeking is the infinite, though still bound by his imagination to the finite, the polytheist has a secret dissatisfaction with his own religion; and this drives him continually to add new divinities to his Pantheon, as if by the multiplication of finites he could reach the infinite.

On the other hand, this tendency to differentiate is met by an opposite tendency to unity. The idea of God, which is bound up with man's consciousness of himself—*i.e.* the idea of God as the infinite principle of unity which is beyond all the differences of the finite, though implied in them all—is continually working against a mere external polytheistic system which ranks the gods together as independent powers;

it is continually breaking down the boundaries which have been set up between their separate spheres, and extending without limit the attributes of any god that is at the moment the object of worship. Thus is produced the phenomenon to which Professor Max Müller has given the name of *Henotheism, i.e.* a polytheism, in which the gods are, as it were, continually melting into each other; or in which any one of them may be stretched to the infinite so as to leave no room for the operation of the others. The very attitude of worship is an attitude of devotion, of absolute self-surrender, which in the intensity of its feeling excludes all reservation, and so tends to lift its object beyond all the limits which at other times may be recognised for it. Thus the chaos of Polytheism is never without some beginnings of a cosmos; or, perhaps we should rather say, the religious instinct, with its controlling tendency to the one and the infinite, is continually striving to gain the mastery over the multiplicity of forms which in this stage of thought are forced upon it by sense and imagination.

It is not here necessary to speak of the manifold shapes of mythology which have appeared in the long struggle of religion with the first inadequate form of its expression. Perhaps, at the present stage of inquiry, it is impossible, if it ever will be possible, to state exactly the steps by which mythological conceptions were gradually elevated and finally abolished.

Here I shall confine myself to pointing out one or two of the most prominent crises in the long struggle. The first of these is that which has given rise to what is called roughly the solar theory of mythology. In many nations—among the Peruvians and Mexicans in America, and again in different ways in Egypt, in China, and in early India—we find a worship of the heavens or the heavenly bodies, of the great elemental powers of sky and earth, rising above the undergrowth of domestic and tribal worships, limiting and dominating though never destroying them. And this religious progress seems to go along with the development of a wider national unity, both as its effect and its cause. The absurd extension at one time given to the solar mythic theory has of late produced a reaction which has in the main been wholesome, in so far as it has led to the rejection of one exclusive interpretation of myths. But the main vice of that theory was that it referred to the earliest period of religious history a mode of conception which really indicates a considerable advance in civilisation. Some childish myths about the sun and the heavenly bodies, indeed, appear to be as early as anything we can trace in the history of mythology; but the marked predominance of such ideas, and the separation of them from the crowd of other mythic fancies, appears to be the characteristic of a par-

ticular stage in the development of man,—a stage in which he has attained to a certain width and freedom of view as to the nature of the world in which he is placed, partly as the cause, and partly as the effect, of a wider national consciousness. The physical universalism of the heavens, if we may use the expression, is thus the first form in which the idea of a universal God, a God who is above, though not as yet exclusive of all others, presents itself to the spirit of man. Aristotle, in speaking of the Eleatics, the first school of philosophy that laid hold of the idea of the unity of the world as an abstract principle, says that Xenophanes, the founder of that school, "looking to the universe as a whole, declared that God is the One." It was by a similar process of thought that, at a much earlier date, the Chinese, the Egyptians, the Indians, the Persians,—in short, almost all the nations with whom civilisation may be said to have originated,—were led to raise their eyes above the special forms of nature to the overarching heaven, and to seek in those heavenly bodies which stand in general relations to the whole life of nature and man for the main embodiment of their idea of the divine. And the same lifting of the spirit, which thus separated the celestial god or gods from the totems or family and tribal divinities of an earlier age, awakened at the

same time the consciousness of a national life reaching beyond the bonds of family or tribe. The races that thus literally raised their eyes and their spirits to heaven, became the aristocracy, the conquering and civilising races of the early world, just because they claimed direct descent from, or relationship to, natural powers, which were regarded as universal in their dominion. The Vedic hymns preserve for us the authentic expression of this early phase of the spiritual life of man, the poetic revelation of the thoughts and feelings of those who first recognised that they had 'a citizenship in heaven.' The proud sense of belonging to a race of higher birth and higher powers than other races, the fearless outlook upon nature and upon human life, the freedom from grovelling superstition, and the soaring strength of an imaginative sympathy which forces all nature to become an instrument for expressing the emotions of the human soul—these, which are the characteristics of the poets of the Veda, are only the natural indications of the inspiring power of this new idea upon a people that was fit to be its recipient. No wonder that, by its consciousness of alliance with powers that controlled all nature, the Aryan race was lifted above all fear of disaster either from envious gods or mortal enemies, and that it carried into the struggle with other races an energy of spirit which speedily made

it the first conqueror of India. Animated by such a faith and by the higher sense of national unity, the early Aryans came upon other races like superior beings whom it was useless to resist. We might say of them in relation to other peoples what is said of Coriolanus in relation to Rome, they took them

> "as the osprey does the fish,
> By sovereignty of nature."

Now, the principle of this religion and morality is the same as that of which we have already spoken. Its social bond is still a kinship of men to men, based on their common kinship to a god or gods. The gods, moreover, are still conceived as outward objects, and the tie that binds them to their worshippers is still thought of as a natural tie of blood. But subject to these general limitations, it is obvious that a great advance has been achieved, and that we have here reached, at least in one aspect of it, the culminating point of *objective* religion. For the objects selected for worship are as unlimited as objects can be: they are objects to which it is difficult to conceive any individual or race as standing in an exclusive relation. And, indeed, the very conception of such an exclusive relation begins with this religion to disappear; for the Vedic hymns already trace *all* races back to the same divine origin, though in various ways they claim a more direct and honourable relation to the divine power for the Aryan race than for any other. Again, as it is an

objective religion, the Vedic religion is still polytheistic. For not only does it leave room *beneath* it for an undergrowth of family and gentile worships, but even the unity of the heavenly power is with it broken into many differences; and beside Varuna, the most comprehensive name under which the divinity is worshipped, we have Mitra, Agni, Indra, and a host of forms which represent one or other aspect of the great power of nature. But the separate personality or individuality of the gods, though it stands out vividly in the poetic representation of them, is yet very easily thrown aside when it has served its immediate purpose. The 'many' sinks back into the 'one'; or, by the henotheistic process to which I have already referred, each divinity in turn absorbs all the others. Thus the polytheism of India soon begins to betray that pantheism which is latent in it, and the multiplicity of gods yields to the conception of one universal Power which is present in all finite forms of gods and men alike, which produces and consumes them all in turn, which through all their variety "spreads undivided, operates unspent," and which alone is, while they only *seem*. The physical universality of the heavens was the stepping-stone upon which the religious mind of India rose to the abstract universality of thought, the Absolute Being in which everything else is lost. This pantheism is the final outcome of polytheism, the fatal gulf that must

ultimately swallow up all merely objective religions. For religion, so long as it seeks the infinite and divine in objects without us, must, time after time, discover that the objects it has selected are finite and therefore not divine; and even when it turns its eyes to the all-embracing heaven, it has to learn that the 'heaven of heavens cannot contain' God, any more than a river or a tree, an animal or a man. Religion is, therefore, reduced to the worship of an abstract infinite Being, in which all that is finite is submerged and lost. It can save itself from such a *euthanasia*, such a gradual loss of all positive content or meaning, only by abandoning the purely objective representation of God, and by recognising that in the inner life of the self or subject, there is a higher revelation of Him than can be found in any object as such, or even in the whole world of objects.

LECTURE TENTH.

THE RELIGION OF GREECE.

The movement through Pantheism to Subjective Religion in the Upanishads—The Greek Phase of Objective Religion—How its Anthropomorphism mediates the Transition to Subjective Religion—That it (1) *Humanises the Nature-Powers; and* (2) *Substitutes a Relation to Man for the Relation to Nature—Characteristics of Greek Art—Tendency to Unify Greek Polytheism:* (1) *by setting Fate above the Gods; and* (2) *by introducing the Monotheistic Idea—Herodotus and the Tragedians.*

In the last lecture I attempted to deal with the general characteristics of what I have called objective religion, *i.e.* the religion in which God, who is properly conceived as the unity beyond all differences, especially the difference of subject and object, is represented as one object among others. I pointed out that, while the object selected as divine need not be man, and in the earliest times is generally not man, yet that object, whatever it be, is commonly regarded as the ancestor of the family or tribe that worships it; because blood-relationship is as yet the only type under which the alliance of man with man, and there-

fore also the alliance of man with God, can be conceived. In this way, the god is viewed as an ancestor whose blood flows in all the members of a kinship, and whose office is to protect it against other kinships and their rival gods. Such a system is necessarily polytheistic, in the sense that it acknowledges a multiplicity of divine powers, who are opposed to each other as are the kinships they protect. Polytheism, in the sense of the worship of many gods, seems often to arise by the coalescence of many kinships into a wider society, or by the conquest of one kinship by another.

Now I pointed out that a culminating point in the development of such polytheism is that in which we have a *heavenly* god or gods raised to a position of superiority over the other gods. Such a worship has in many nations been the indication of the rise of a wider national consciousness. Of this process the sun-worship of Peru, the heaven-worship of China, the Egyptian worship of the celestial powers that produce the vicissitude of night and day, summer and winter, are different instances. But the highest example of it is found in the Vedic hymns, wherein the early Aryans expressed their consciousness of a divinity which manifested itself in the heavenly and elemental powers, and which also was the source of the nobler stream of life that ran in their own veins, as contrasted with the other races of India against whom they were fighting.

The Vedic, like the Egyptian religion, was a kind of *polytheism;* for the different heavenly forms deified were regarded as separate powers which in a manner supplemented one another. But, on the other hand, the worship of such powers itself carried with it a kind of physical suggestion of universality and unity which was never quite lost sight of. The result of this was the phenomenon which Professor Max Müller has called *Henotheism.* Each divinity at the moment of worship swells out into a universal power and absorbs all the others, or again the different divinities are easily melted together into one by a new effort of imaginative construction. Finally, as reflexion advances, this wavering and uncertain picture of 'gods many and lords many,' comes to be regarded as a mere show and appearance of diversity, in which the one infinite being masks himself. The Indian mind is never very far from an abstract pantheism, and before the Vedic collection of hymns was completed, it had reached and expressed it with no uncertain sound. Thus, even at this early date, objective religion was attempting to escape from the finitude which necessarily attaches to objects, as such, into the abyss of a negative infinite. And the outward change which raised a priestly contemplative caste above all the others, and especially above the proud Aryan warriors who still held the supremacy in the early Vedic age, was highly favourable to such a transition. India, in

fact, never developed a higher social life than that of the warlike Aryan tribes of the Indus; and these, in the progress of their conquest of India, lost hold of that national consciousness which was just dawning among them before they were severed from each other. And the work of conquest itself, while it maintained their superiority as a caste or castes of nobler origin, produced no higher social organisation than that of an aggregation of subject tribes under a despotic ruler. For the same reason, their polytheism did not develop towards the comparative order of the Greek pantheon; and the increasing anthropomorphism of later times brought with it only an additional source of disorder. Hence also the growing consciousness of a unity beneath the multiplicity of the gods could only take an abstract form, the form of an undefined Being or Substance, out of which all was supposed to come and to which everything must return. The Brahmanic religion only rose to a *pantheism* which was an *acosmism*, to a unity which was no principle of order in the manifold differences of things, but merely a gulf in which all difference was lost. And the ethics which could spring from such a faith was only the negative ethics of an asceticism which renounced the world and withdrew from it as an empty illusion. The Upanishads, which contain the last philosophic expression of the Vedic religion, celebrate in endless variety of phrase the triumph of

the soul over the objective world, which it leaves behind in its nothingness, in order that it may lose itself in the Infinite Being.

In the Upanishads we have also another change, the change from objective to subjective religion; but of that I do not wish as yet to speak. Here I wish rather to deal with another form of what we may still regard as objective religion, though, owing to the character of the object which it selects as divine, it is widely separated from most other religions of this type. In a sense, all the religions of which we have spoken are vaguely anthropomorphic, just because they want a consciousness of the distinction between man and other beings. Greek religion also is anthropomorphic, but it is so with a clear consciousness of that distinction. It is the first religion which definitely conceives man as the highest of natural beings, and, because he is the highest, regards his nature as that which is most like to the divine. It is the first which distinctly levels nature up to man, instead of levelling man down to nature. It, therefore, not only *personifies* the natural powers which it lifts to heaven but *humanises* them. Starting from the basis of something like the Vedic worship of the powers of nature, it proceeds to invest these powers with a complete human individuality, which sometimes altogether conceals that basis. In the Vedas the heavens, the fire, the winds, the storm are presented as deities

in vivid individualised images, but such individualisation is only for the moment of poetic vision: it does not hinder the power so envisaged from returning in the next moment into the vagueness of a mere natural object, which itself is easily merged in the unity of nature. In Greece, on the other hand, each aspect or form of nature which is grasped by the fancy of mythology, once for all takes on an individuality, which is so definite and characteristic that it seems to detach itself altogether from its natural root. In gods like Apollo and Athene the traces of a naturalistic origin remain only, like the fawn ears of Donatello in Hawthorne's romance, as a faint indication of that out of which they have developed. In others, such as Poseidon or Pan, the traces may be more distinct; but all have been to a large extent humanised and liberated from the bonds of outward necessity. This depression of nature into a subordinate place, or, if you like, this rise of man above nature, was the essential change by which the Greek genius broke away from the original Aryan stock, and entered upon its separate course of development; and certain parts of the Greek mythology itself, such as the legends about the conquest of the earlier gods by the gods of Olympus, seem to indicate that the Greeks themselves were not without a consciousness of this change. Nor can we be content to regard such myths only as glimpses of truth resting upon

some half-forgotten tradition of the past. Rather, we must recognise in them the expression of a contrast upon which the Greek mind is continually dwelling, and which furnishes the great theme of its mythology. The idea of humanity—meaning by humanity the peculiar powers of intelligence and will by which man is distinguished from the animals—as victorious over nature, *i.e.* over brute force guided only by instinct and passion—is a central thought which reproduces itself in almost every Greek myth: in the war of the Olympians with the Titans, in the slaying of the Python by Apollo, in the hunting of Artemis, in the labours of Herakles. In many of these myths, indeed, we may detect an original naturalistic meaning, a solar or elemental significance; but this, even in the earliest poetry of Greece, has fallen altogether into the background or received a new interpretation. The progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac has been lost in the civilising labours of the hero who rids the earth of its monsters; and the wild animals that surrounded the Ephesian goddess of production have been changed into the conquered victims of the "queen and huntress, chaste and fair." The gods of Greece are powers that make, perhaps we may not say strictly, 'for righteousness,' but certainly for civilisation. They are man's forerunners in the work of taming and subduing nature into his servant; and it is his glory that he can follow them in their labours. If the Greek

regards himself as superior to the men of other races, it is just because he conceives himself to be specially gifted with this ordering intelligence, which does not rush blindly to its aims, but with wise self-restraint and subordination of impulse, considers deliberately the means whereby they are to be attained. Aristotle, when he tells us that the barbarians have only reason enough to obey a rational authority which is placed without them in another, but that the Greeks alone possess the reason that can originate and command, is only expressing in a less naïve manner a thought that is already present to Homer, when he makes the Greeks advance to battle in ordered and silent ranks under wise commanders inspired by Athene, while the Trojans stream out in a confused and shouting mob, driven forward by Ares, the god who is the embodiment of animal ferocity and reckless passion.

We can detect two steps in the process of humanising which the Greek gods undergo. Of the first of these we have already spoken, and it was in great part completed even at the time of Homer. The gods of Greece, even while they were still conceived as nature-powers, become more and more distinctly humanised and individualised; whereas in most Asiatic religions, and particularly in the Vedic system, they are only personified; and their fictitious personality easily melts away into the natural power or principle from which for a moment it has been

detached by the poetic effort after realisation. The reason is that the eye of the Asiatic poet was really upon nature and not upon man. He might, indeed, attribute human faculties and relationships to the gods, but he did not seek in any further way to bring them near to himself. But the Greek was not satisfied with this; he sought to realise every trait of character and outward appearance, till the god became as definitely individualised for the imagination as any earthly hero. Indeed, in the clear atmosphere of the Homeric muse, where the heroes are exalted by reverence above the ordinary level of humanity, and the gods are drawn down towards it by the need for imaginative realisation, the only distinction left seems to be the freedom of the gods from decay and death, from the limit of mortality to which the heroes are still subjected; and even that limit could be crossed, and was supposed to have been crossed in one transcendent instance. As Aristotle says: men become gods, *δι' ἀρετῆς ὑπερβόλην*, by transcendent merit. "The gods are immortal men and men are mortal gods." If, therefore, we still regard the Greek divinities as nature-powers, yet this means only that every natural agency is explained, and, we might even say, explained away, by an idealised human figure, through whom its obscure meaning is raised into the articulate language of human passion and human will.

And this necessarily goes along with another change. Not only are the gods humanised, but in the case at least of many of the most prominent figures of Greek mythology, the connexion of the god with nature becomes loosened, and a new connexion with human life is substituted in its place. The change by which the life of the country, the pastoral and agricultural life, dependent on incalculable natural powers for its success, becomes subordinated to the life of cities, with its artificial wants and resources and its relative freedom from the bondage of nature, hastened this new development. Hence Zeus, the god of heaven, who in earlier times was almost identified with the heaven itself, came to be looked upon mainly as the god of justice, the source of all rightful order and authority in the state. Apollo's connexion with the outward light of the sun fell into the background, and he was thought of mainly as the god of poetry and prophecy, whose inspiration must guide the minds of men when their own wisdom fails. Athene, even in Homer, has already ceased to be the heavenly fire, the lightning which bursts from the head of Zeus, and has become the source of that practical wisdom, that valour mixed with prudence and self-command, which was to find its real embodiment in the civic life of Athens. The interests of art and science, as well as of a political and social life which, for the first time, was based not mainly on kinship, but rather on law

and constitution had become the absorbing interests of existence, and they were therefore those with which the idea of the divine was most closely associated.

Now, in this humanising of the gods there is a certain ambiguity which deserves to be carefully considered. In selecting the human form as that which is peculiarly divine, the Greek might seem to be doing little more than had been done by those who worshipped *phytomorphic* and *zoomorphic* gods, or by those who deified the heavens or the sun. For the god is still identified with an object which is externally related to other objects; and so long as this is the case, it seems of comparatively little importance *what* object is selected. Thought is still in that lowest form, in which the consciousness of God and the consciousness of self are forced to hide their real characteristics under a sensuous disguise. The spiritual is still presented in the shape of the natural. But, though this is true, the selection of *this* particular object is a great step toward the discovery of the defect of the whole objective way of representing the things of the spirit. For man *is* a self, whether he is aware of the full significance of being a self or not. The being who knows may not as yet be clearly distinguished from a thing that is known; but still the fact that he is a subject as well as an object cannot but affect the conception of him as an object. Hence a religion that conceives the principle of unity in all things

under the form of man, is on the way towards the conception of that principle as a subject, which is above all objects, and which therefore can find its true manifestation only in the inner life of those who are subjects like itself. The Greek religion is thus placed between the outward and the inward, between objective and subjective religion. It is unable to attain the latter, because it looks at man mainly as an object; it is unable to be content with the former, because the object it has selected owes its distinctive character to its being also a subject.

The effect of this ambiguous position of the Greek religion is to favour the development of art and poetry, and indeed to make art and poetry the highest expression of the religious idea. For art and poetry are the necessary expression of the spiritual, so long as it has to be expressed in the form of the natural, or so long as a consciousness of the spiritual, as separated from and opposed to the natural, has not yet arisen. In nations which have not reached this stage, as among the Indians, the Egyptians, and the Phœnicians, we do, indeed, find a kind of art; but generally this art takes the form of a symbolism, which is sometimes grotesque and extravagant, or of a mere magnificence of size and colour. The builders of the pyramids, like those of the tower of Babel, seemed to be trying to reach the infinite by adding finite to finite. And the Indians

often sought, by distortions or inconsistent combinations of all kinds of natural shapes, to suggest a meaning for which they had as yet no distinct word of utterance. The sphinxes of Egypt and Assyria were efforts to find expression for a secret which seemed everywhere to be hinted at, but nowhere fully manifested. But the Greek had at least discovered that the solution of the riddle of the sphinx lies in man and in man only; that in the human form divine the secret is clearly revealed which nature elsewhere utters only in dark and mysterious language. The last word of the Egyptian religion was the inscription on the veil of the goddess Isis, 'I am that which is, that which hath been, and that which will be; no man hath lifted my veil': in other words, the religion of Egypt ends with the idea of a pantheistic unity, in which all finite forms are lost, and which is symbolised by all but expressed by none of them. The Greek, on the other hand, has discovered that finite objects are not to be set side by side as symbols of a truth which cannot be revealed, but rather that man is, as we might express it in modern language, the last term of an evolutionary series, in which the meaning of all other existences is summed up and for the first time brought to clear expression. Man is thus, to use a word of later Greek philosophy, 'the measure of all things,'

because he is the culmination of all things. Yet, as the subjective consciousness, the consciousness of the self in its full opposition to the not-self, has not yet made its appearance, man, though the ultimate term of nature, is not yet conceived as in any way separated from nature. In him nature is made vocal and self-conscious, but the consciousness of self is not yet regarded as giving him an inner life of his own, which in any way cuts him off from the natural basis of his existence. He is the youngest child of nature upon whom her highest favours have been bestowed, but he has not yet rebelled against his parent, still less does he claim to have a higher origin.

Now it is this consciousness that lifts the Greek above the Asiatic, frees him from a superstitious reverence for powers alien to himself, and gives him courage as an artist to break away from the traditions of his Egyptian and Phoenician teachers. The Greek artist frees himself at a very early period from the bonds of the conventional and the grotesque, from the stiffness, the lifelessness, and the bizarre distortion of natural form, which we so often meet with in the art of the East; and he soon learns to give to his figures that plastic individuality and moving grace which makes the human form the living expression of human thought and passion. Yet, as he is still in the

golden mean of art,—as he has only discovered that which lifts man above nature, but not yet that which lifts him above himself—there is no straining after the utterance of that which can never be fully expressed in the form of sensuous perception or imagination. The spirit has not yet outgrown its fleshly vesture, or begun to regard it as a prison house. In Asiatic and Egyptian art the soul is not yet sufficiently awake completely to inform the body: in modern art it often

> "frets the pigmy body to decay,
> And o'er-informs the tenement of clay."

In Greece it is as in the crowning moment of youth, in which soul and body are in perfect balance with each other and with the world, when pain and disease have not yet disturbed the harmony of man with himself and with things, and when the demands of desire do not yet seem to have outgrown the possibilities of earthly satisfaction. In such a time all that is needful for the artist is to omit a few disturbing features, to clear away a few stains of imperfection and finitude, to erase a few traces of weakness and dependence, in order to exalt man into an image of the mighty gods; just as, on the other hand, it is only the fate of mortality that appears to separate him from them. The universal, the infinite, the spiritual, the divine, are as yet known only as that, the whole import of which may be gathered up in a single human form; or, at

least, as that which requires for its expression only that such a form should be generalised, idealised, and freed from the blemishes that cling to the individualised existence of particular men. It was of this that Goethe was thinking when he said that the characteristic of Greek art is *Bedeutsamkeit*, or significance; in other words, that its products are characteristic forms from which everything has been removed that is amorphous, inorganic or accidental, everything that does not go to the expression of the spirit of life within. In like manner Greek religion may be said to dwell in a middle region of imagination, lifted above the accidents of individual existence, yet not quite attaining to the universal. Or, to put it in another way, its gods are still represented as *objects*, yet as objects of a peculiarly ideal character which do not take rank among ordinary objects. But such a golden mean is difficult, nay impossible, to maintain; it is like the perfect blossom of youth, which is no sooner reached than it has begun to pass away. If we speak of Greek religion in its actuality, we must admit that it existed only in process to attain to this point, and that it had no sooner attained it, than it was fatally carried beyond it. The Greek religious idea was thus of an essentially transitionary character—involving a kind of unstable equilibrium between the objective and the subjective, the natural and the spiritual, the particular and the universal. For, as man may be regarded

in two aspects, as an object or as a subject; and as he cannot be considered in his distinction from other natural objects without the subjective aspect of his being coming to some extent into view, so the selection of *him* as the objective embodiment of the divine might be said to be equivalent to placing the religious consciousness upon an inclined plane, on which it could not but be gradually driven forward from objective to subjective religion. A few remarks will be sufficient to show the nature of this movement.

Greek religion springs, as we have seen, from a worship of the powers of nature, similar to that which we find among the Aryans of northern India in the Vedic period. But such a worship is, as we have also seen, a Henotheism, *i.e.* it wavers between the one and the many, between a polytheism and a pantheism, the latter of which gradually gains ground upon the former, as the nation becomes more reflective. Now, something similar to this happens also in Greece; but it is greatly modified by the anthropomorphic character of the Greek religion, which hides the abstract unity under a multiplicity, not of powers of nature which easily pass into each other, but of humanised divinities, each of which has all the fulness of a distinct individuality, all the riches of a definite character. Gods like Zeus, or Athene, or Hermes resist the process of fusion which would melt them into one

divine power, in a much more stubborn way than forms like Varuna or Mitra, Agni or Indra. The humanising of the gods gives to each of them an independent substantiality, makes each of them a whole in himself, a *microcosm* which will not readily sink back to be lost in the *macrocosm.* Hence, when the desire for unity awakes, Greek religion at first seeks to satisfy it by the conception of a monarchically arranged pantheon, in which the highest god is not supreme or absolute, but has many powers subordinate to him, to whom he is obliged to make partial concessions. This is the general picture of the Olympian heaven which is presented to us in Homer. The primitive desire of the Greek mind for order and system was sufficiently satisfied by an organisation of the heavenly powers similar to that which existed on earth, in which a king supported and limited by a council of nobles, ruled, rather by prestige than force, over a generally submissive though sometimes recalcitrant multitude.

At the same time, the genius of religion is necessarily at war with this simple application of the finite relations of men to the divine. The marked outlines of character and individuality in the Homeric gods were partly due to the poet's effort to realise and picture his *dramatis personæ;* and we cannot suppose that the popular religion was ever so distinct and

definite in its conceptions. In fact, even in Homer, we can see that the gods, in what has well been called their *ex cathedra* functions, as givers of good and executors of justice, are not thought of quite in the same way as when they are taken as the subjects of particular legends. Furthermore, there are already at work two different tendencies, both of which make for unity, though their effects cannot as yet be clearly distinguished from each other. One of these tendencies gives rise to the notion of an abstract power of fate, to which even the gods are subjected; while the other favours an exaltation of Zeus which would make him absorb all the other divine powers. The former may be regarded as pointing to the abstract unity of pantheism, in which all the Vedic divinities lose themselves; while the latter rather foreshadows a monotheistic solution of the difficulty, as it points to the idea of one great self-conscious power in which all the separate deities are merged, with the loss of their independent individuality but not of their spiritual nature.

Now the subsequent progress of the religious thought of Greece lay just in the development of these two tendencies: first, in the growth of the consciousness of a divine unity, which was conceived in a very abstract way as a fate or law of necessity; and, secondly, in the advance from this

abstract or pantheistic unity to that ideal of a spiritual principle which is implied in monotheism.

In the earlier period of Greek history, the pantheistic unity tends, in literature at least, to prevail over the manifold polytheism of the Homeric age. Herodotus often prefers to speak of the divine power in an impersonal way, and to treat it as practically identical with a *Nemesis,* or fate, which manifests itself mainly in keeping finite beings within the limits of their finitude, and in bringing back their transitory existence in a few years to the nothingness from which it has emerged. And, though it may be true that in Herodotus there are occasional hints at the moral lesson that pride goes before a fall, yet it cannot be said that in his general conception of the limits set to humanity there is any distinct idea of a moral necessity. When he expresses it personally, what he speaks of is the "envy of the gods" that "will not permit anyone to be wanton, but themselves"; and we can only escape attributing to him all the superstitious consequences of this conception by regarding it simply as a poetic expression for the limitation that necessarily clings to finitude. Taken in this sense, we might perhaps treat it as a popular equivalent for the language of the philosopher Heraclitus, who declares that the one permanent thing in the world is the law of change under which no

finite thing remains for two moments the same. On this view the passing away of the finite is no external destiny forced upon it by unpropitious powers. The finite exists only as it passes away, and the more desperately and proudly it tries to assert itself against the law of mortality, the quicker is the recoil of its doom upon it. "If the sun transgressed its paths, the Erinyes would drag him back."

Now, it is this thought that supplies the basis from which Greek tragedy starts. If we compare Homer with the Tragedians, we see that in the interval a chilling sense of the limits of mortality has fallen upon the Greek mind. The dark shadow, which in the former is hidden by the force and variety of the life that occupies the foreground of the picture, has begun to reveal itself more clearly. The bright play of mythology is now seen to have an iron heart. The varied picture of the action and reaction, of the victories and defeats of free individualities, human and divine, is but a mask on the stern face of necessity. What must be, must be, is the end of all. There is no pleading with fate and no final reconciliation that reaches beyond it. Necessity is hidden even in the acts that seek to overcome or evade it; and often, as in the story of Oedipus, by a kind of irony of destiny, the struggles of the victim are turned into the means of bringing about the very doom they would avert.

The only deliverance for the soul is in the hopeless fearless heroism which simply accepts its fate, and by a final effort of resignation detaches itself from all the interests that fate has assailed. In such a view there is no consolation or hope; but the heroic spirit can do without either. The hero can accept his doom, not, like the monotheist, as the decree of a righteous and irresistible will; nor, like the Christian, as the manifestation of an absolute spiritual power which has in itself the cure for every wound which it inflicts; but simply as *necessity*, with which it is useless, and therefore degrading, to strive.[1]

At the same time, while this is the general basis or presupposition of Greek tragedy, we can trace in it the growth of other ideas which were ultimately to triumph over it, if not in the religion, at least in the philosophy of Greece. What Aeschylus and Sophocles put upon the stage is not simply the vain attempt of mortal men to escape the fate of mortality, the effort of finite wills to claim more than is allowed to finitude, and the consequent recoil of their destiny upon them. Nor is it even the simple moral lesson that excess and insolence bring retribution upon themselves. It is rather the tragic collision of interests, each of which has a real moral basis and a claim to its own place in life; but

[1] Cf. Hegel, xii. 132; vi. 295.

which is driven to assert that claim in opposition to other interests, which also have their own legitimate place, their own ethical basis. The tragic conflict is not between right and wrong, but between right and right.[1] When Prometheus rebels against Zeus, when the Eumenides claim as their victim the divinely missioned servant of Apollo, this, as Aeschylus saw, is no contest in which all the pleas of justice are on one side; it is a struggle of mighty spiritual powers, the absolute destruction of either of which would bring ruin to the ethical life of man. And the work of fate is, therefore, after many sacrifices of the individuals who have wronged either interest, to bring about a healing compromise, in which the lower right shall take its place beside, but subordinate to, the higher. Prometheus has to reveal his secret, and to save the monarchy of a Zeus who has become just and reconciled to men. The Eumenides, the old gods that watch over the sanctity of the family bond, must yield to the higher claims of the gods of the state; but, at the same time, they must find a temple near the Areopagus, the seat of the court which has freed their victim from his guilt. In Sophocles this equipoise is less definitely kept up. He, perhaps owing to a deeper ethical consciousness, rejects the Aeschylean compromises in moral conflicts, and lets the opposite

[1] Cf. Hegel, ii. 321 *seq.*

rights fight it out to the bitter end; but he still more definitely emphasises the lesson that the conflict *is* a moral one. And his last word, in *Oedipus Coloneus*, is to distinguish between the outward act of him who, in following out one legitimate interest has been led unconsciously into the violation of another, and his inward character. Such an one the gods at last save as by fire in a divine deliverance, though only after he has suffered the consequences of his unlawful act. Destiny thus becomes a moral law, which permits the individual who has, however unwittingly, violated a moral interest, to suffer for his wrong; but which at the last allows a deeper voice of divine justice to be heard, a voice which regards not his act but his will. The subjective claim of right is thus beginning to interfere, even in Sophocles, with the purely objective demands of the law.

Finally, in Euripides this subjective element becomes so prominent that the idea of an external law of destiny seems to be all but lost. The outward world is left to a capricious power sometimes called fate, but often and more appropriately, chance; it is regarded as a medley in which it is difficult to discern either a law of necessity or a divine purpose; as the outward play of romantic accident which has its main interest in the fact that it somehow stirs into activity the inward play of thought and

feeling.[1] The divine voice is now heard, if at all, only in the inner oracle of the heart; and the real tragedy, the real victories and defeats, are those that are won or lost by the soul in its struggles with itself. Euripides is a rationalist and a sceptic, not only as regards the deities of mythology, but in the sense that he has learnt to doubt the existence of any divine power manifested in the outward world. But, in place of belief in a God without, he substitutes a faith in the God within, which contains the promise of a new religion. Hence if Euripides is the least perfect of the Greek dramatic artists, it is partly at least because he is inspired with a new idea, which is inconsistent with the principle upon which the Greek drama rested. The grand outward balance of destiny, which Aeschylus and Sophocles tried to represent, loses its interest for a poet whose eye is turned almost exclusively upon the inner struggle that rends the heart of a Medea or a Phaedra; and the only solution for which he really cares is, not the outward Aeschylean judgment that places the temple of the Eumenides beside the temple of Athene, but the victory over self achieved

[1] Cf. *e.g. Hecuba*, 957 :

Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν πιστὸν οὔτ' εὐδοξία
Οὔτ' αὖ καλῶς πράσσοντα μὴ πράξειν κακῶς.
Φύρουσι δ' αὐτὰ θεοὶ πάλιν τε καὶ πρόσω,
Ταραγμὸν ἐντιθέντες, ὡς ἀγνωσίᾳ
Σέβωμεν αὐτούς.

by an Alcestis or a Makaria. In Euripides we see already the dawn of the new modern tragedy, in which the inner predominates over the outer life, and each one's fate is simply the evolution of his own soul,—the tragedy of which we find the highest types in Shakespeare.

LECTURE ELEVENTH.

THE FUNCTION OF THE IMAGINATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OBJECTIVE RELIGION.

Poetry as the Expression of Moral and Religious Truth in Homer Idealising Power of Imagination in Mythology—Plato's View as to its "Noble Untruth"—How Rationalism destroys it—The Greek Enlightenment and Plato's View of it—The Modern Enlightenment—General Character of its Conception of Reality—Necessity of its Victory, and its Effect upon Religion—Deism as a Religion—Possibility of a Compromise between Scientific Truth and Poetic Fiction.

In the preceding lecture we were considering objective religion in the Greek form, in which man is selected as the object which is to be regarded as kindred with and capable of representing the divine. In this religion the gods are not merely personified but humanised, and all nature is interpreted as the manifestation of beings like men, though lifted in wisdom and power above ordinary men, and freed from decay and death and all the accidents of mortality. At the same time we have to remember that man is here conceived rather as an object than as a subject,

as the highest of natural beings but still natural. Hence we are still in the region of naturalistic polytheism and not of spiritual monotheism. In the progress of Greek thought, however, advances are steadily made towards this higher conception. For, in the first place, the dawning reflexion of Greece seeking for unity, finds satisfaction for a time in the idea of a fate—or law of necessity—to which even the gods are subjected; and then, in the second place, by a movement of thought which we trace in Greek poetry, and especially in Greek dramatic poetry, this law of necessity is reinterpreted as a moral law of freedom, and the supreme power of the universe is conceived not as a fate but as a providence.

I shall not in the present lecture attempt to follow this process any farther, as I wish in the first instance to illustrate another aspect of the advance from the natural to the spiritual, viz. the way in which the poetic imagination gradually fills the objects worshipped, even while they are still conceived as mere objective beings which take their place among other objects with a higher spiritual meaning. In doing so, we may still take an illustration of the process from Greece, for Greece, better than any other country, shows us how far the poetic imagination can by itself solve the problem of the opposition and re-union of the ideal and the real; how far it can separate the religious from the secular consciousness, and use the

former to elevate the latter. In the poems of Homer, we have an almost perfect instance of the way in which, and the extent to which, this process may be effected; in other words, how objects may be kept *as objects* within the forms of the sensuous consciousness, and yet filled with a meaning which is not sensuous. With Homer, the whole picture of heaven and earth remains still in the simple naturalistic form. We never from him hear of anything but particular objects and events, subject to all the ordinary conditions of space and time. Nothing is told us which might not have been seen, or, at least, nothing which cannot be pictured under the conditions of sense. Yet in the hands of Homer the actions narrated in the poem somehow get a wider meaning, and become suggestions or symbols of something more than themselves. By the unerring tact of the poet, the objects and events are cleared of accidental elements, and so presented that they are hardly to be thought of except as types, *i.e.* as particulars which concentrate in themselves the meaning of a whole class of objects and events. This instinctive selection of the poet is, in its way, as enlightening as the scientific man's deliberate and conscious selection of just those circumstances that throw light upon a hitherto hidden law of nature. The poet, however, secures his end not by generalising, but, more simply and directly, by representing the powers of nature and the principles

of action within us as embodied in particular divine beings, who are constantly interfering with the fates and actions of men, and guiding them to the catastrophe which is their fit result. So definitely is this idea carried out in the Homeric poems, that to modern readers it often seems as if all the merit or demerit of the actions of the heroes were taken away by the support or hindrance they receive from above. Men seem to be reduced to mere puppets with which the gods play. For all that men do is, according to the poet, done by the god; who not only excites and takes away their courage, fills their breasts with resolve or panic terror, but even directs or turns aside their weapons in battle. In truth, this reduplication of agency, as we may call it, was necessary for Homer; he had no other way of bringing before us the universal or divine power, except as another particular. He could not represent to us the ideal forces that rule man's life, except in the shape of other beings *like* men, who directly interfered with his actions or their effects. As the spiritual world was only conceivable to him as another natural world, there was no way left for him to explain their relations except this method of reduplication; he is compelled, first, to separate human and divine as two independent realities, and then to represent the action of the latter upon the former as a direct outward interference. In this way the deeds

done come to be attributed, sometimes to men, sometimes to the gods, and sometimes to men and gods working together. Homer could neither conceal this difficulty nor solve it: he had no abstract language in which the universal powers of life could be described apart from their special manifestations. If he assigned any reality to the former, he was obliged to bring them together on the same plane with the latter, as particular finite objects. It would be easy to illustrate from the *Iliad* the necessity under which Homer thus lay, of finding a direct sensuous expression for every spiritual fact which he wished to express. In the first book the self-restraint of Achilles is attributed to the goddess Athene, the goddess representing practical wisdom, who comes behind and pulls the hero by the hair, when he is on the point of drawing his sword against Agamemnon. A more poetic example may be found in a later passage in which Homer represents the healing virtue of prayer embodied in certain divine forms, the Virgin daughters of Zeus, who, with slow feet pursue *Ate*, the goddess who represents the fatal blindness of passion, and seek to undo the evil she has done. "Prayers are the daughters of great Zeus: lame are they and withered and short of sight, and with anxious heed they follow the steps of Ate. But Ate is strong and swift of foot so that she far outstrips them all as she rushes over the land;

and they come slowly after to heal the wounds she has made." If Goethe, after all the modern work of reflexion, could say that anything that gave him joy or pain tended to change itself into an image, and that it was only in this way that he could come to a definite understanding of its nature and its influence upon himself, how much more must this have held good in the case of Homer, who lived when as yet there was no language available for the expression of human thought, except the language of immediate perception.

Now, we are apt to take language like that of the passage I have quoted as metaphorical or allegorical. And, in a certain sense, it is so; for something more is *suggested* by it than is expressed. But it is scarcely necessary to say we have not here a case of *conscious* metaphor or allegory. The poet did not first set before him a general idea of a spiritual principle; and then proceed to clothe it in a materialised symbol. This would be an inadequate account of poetry at any time, and specially inadequate as an account of the poetry of an age in which poetry was hardly separated from the prose of fact, and in which the prose of abstract thought had not yet been invented. True poetry is never the combination of an idea and a picture, as separate elements; for in it the one exists only through the other. A metaphor is a naked thought which

puts on a sensuous form as an external dress. A poetic symbol is the living flesh and blood, the organic body, in which an idea must be clothed in order to manifest and realise itself. Hence the true poet only grasps his idea as he embodies it, and embodies it as he grasps it. He thinks in expressing his thought, and it is only in finding the word or the form that he wants, that he discovers what he himself was trying to express. 'While he is musing, the fire burns,' and he 'speaks with his tongue,' realising what he means just in the act of creating the objective picture or image which is its expression. In a later age, indeed, it is difficult for the poet to have such unity of consciousness: he is too much affected by the divisions of reflexion to forget the opposition of the real and the ideal, of the thought and the expression, of the universal and the particular, and hence he often falls into the lower region of conscious allegory and invented metaphor. 'The native hues' of his imagination 'are sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.' But in the Homeric age this difficulty did not exist. Man had not yet found his way *into* the region of abstraction, and therefore he had not to spend any of his poetic strength in escaping from it. He had no feeling of the impossibility of confining a general principle to one particular form, to trouble him in his effort to find

such a form and to realise fully the form he had selected.

When Plato spoke of poetry as a 'noble untruth,' false in form, true in essence, he showed the rise of a consciousness, for which the poetic expression of truth had ceased to be adequate,—a consciousness which could no longer be content to treat the universal principle, which is the principle of unity in many particulars, as if it were merely one of their number. And this advance was a necessary one. The imaginative identification of the ideal and real, the spiritual and the natural, the universal and the particular, must inevitably yield in time to a perception of their difference, and even to an exaggeration of their opposition. The fair unity of poetry, in which fact and thought are blended together, must be broken up into the prosaic consciousness of fact on the one side, and the prosaic consciousness of law on the other. But the necessity of this change, by which mythology must ultimately be destroyed, should not prevent us from recognising the immense value of that idealisation of common phenomenal reality, by which it was made to express a divine meaning; the importance of that sensuous realisation of the divine by which it was first introduced into the natural world. Ideas, it has been said, 'must be given through something,' and, in an early age, that *some-*

thing must be a sensible object in space and time. The first poets or prophets, for they are both in one, unable to comprehend what manner of reality the spirit that was in them 'did signify,' caught directly at any distinct form of nature or humanity that seemed to furnish an expression for it, and proceeded at once to identify this form with the divine presence which haunted them. Or, on the other hand, starting with a mythic form which they had received by tradition from an earlier time, they were led, by a poetic instinct of fitness, gradually to remove from it the features which were inconsistent with their growing idea of the divine; to strip it, so far as possible, of the finite limitations which were not in harmony with the thought it had to express; to give it, in short, the unity and completeness of an ideal figure free from all mortal stain or change. They thus, in the only way then available, at once revealed and solved the problems of man's spiritual being, deepened the consciousness of the opposition between his natural life and its divine ideal, and made that ideal a living presence in the natural world. They did not rend the veil of sense but they made it transparent, like a garment which expresses, while it conceals, the form and action of the wearer. If, then, they clung to the outward and sensible yet by poetic selections and rejections they carried it up to a quintessential form,

in which, to adopt a phrase of Burke, it lost "almost all" its inadequacy "in losing half its grossness." Thus, when the Indian poet makes the god to say, "I am the sun among fires, I am the Ganges among rivers, among mountains I am the Himalayas," by this selection of typical forms he is exemplifying the principles of the imaginative expression of higher truth; he is illustrating that re-constitution and, as it might be called, that transfiguration of the sensible by which poetry and art turn it into the revelation of ideas which cannot thus be *adequately* revealed, but which, in the first instance at least, cannot otherwise be revealed *at all.*

It appears then that, while in our first consciousness of the divine, it must take the form of an object like other objects, of a natural existence among other natural existences, the content of this consciousness is from the first in rebellion against the form. And the way in which this rebellion shows itself is by the imaginative exaltation of the object or objects selected above all others. Thus certain particular existences are freed from the limitations of ordinary reality, and transformed or transfigured, till they become symbols for universal powers or principles. The finite and the infinite begin to be opposed as natural and supernatural, though both are still included within the limits and conditions of the sensible, or, at least,

the sensuously imaginable world. Thus, in Homer, gods and men are separated by a wide gulf, though both in their way enter into the same conflicts and contend with almost the same weapons. The world of mortals is at once divided from the world of the immortals, and elevated by relation to it; yet the immortals themselves are after all still subjected to the same general conditions, and are therefore only to be called *relatively* immortal. For the imagination, though it rises above the world of sense, never, so to speak, gets beyond the reach of its attraction, and it must inevitably return to it in the end. Hence its creations can never be a final satisfaction to the religious consciousness, which is too much in earnest for the bright play of art, and grasps the flower of poetic fiction too violently to spare its bloom.

An advance beyond this stage of the religious consciousness is therefore necessary. Poetry, indeed, never dies, because the universal is always revealed in the particular, and it can be realised by the imagination only under the form of the particular. But the age when poetry is truth, and, in relation to the things of the spirit, the only possible truth, must yield to the age when it is discerned, as by Plato, to be only a 'noble untruth,' a truth of idea which is untruth of fact. The discord of the form with the matter of poetry must in the long run become explicit, and must lead to a revolt against the

former in the interest of the latter. A Homer may with infinite tact disguise the crude nature of the myths with which he works, but he cannot altogether overcome a difficulty that lies in the very nature of his materials. And his very success in elevating and almost transubstantiating the sensible, is apt to awaken a spirit that will not be satisfied, till it is allowed to see the truth without any sensuous disguise. When the veil becomes all but transparent, the hand will soon be stretched out to thrust it aside, that the dimly seen forms behind may be brought to light. It is inevitable also that, when truth is symbolically expressed, the letter of the symbol should ultimately interfere with the spirit of it. As it comes warm and fresh from the lips of the poet, it may be the necessary embodiment of the truth it expresses: it may carry with it its own interpretation to those who first hear it, and who are at the same time infected with the feeling in which it is uttered. But, as it is handed down to others, and repeated again and again by those who are not in the same attitude of mind, its power and meaning evaporate: it is taken literally, and therefore wrongly. Its 'rhetoric,' or, as we should rather say, its poetry, gets 'turned into logic.' The natural understanding is set to interpret the words of inspiration, and it finds in them nothing but contradiction. That which was unessential in the myth, that which made it partly inadequate, is taken as

equally important with that which gave it its suggestive value. The material analogy, under which the spiritual truth 'half conceals and half reveals' itself, is taken as identity, with the necessary consequence, on the one side, that the spiritual is lowered to the natural, and, on the other side, that, just because of this lowering, belief in the spiritual disappears. Superstition, bowing down before an idol, *just as an idol*, provokes the unbelief which refuses to worship even the god. And the rationalism, which begins by pointing out that the myth is not true as the expression of a simple fact, ends in the denial that there can even be anything more than simple fact to express.

This process of disillusionment is one which has often repeated itself in one form or other, in periods when awaking reflexion found itself face to face with decaying faith. In Greece, it took place at the time of the Sophists, and found in them its natural exponents. In the modern world, it began in the eighteenth century, and it has prolonged itself into the present day. In both cases it has been accompanied by an attempt to universalise the physical or mechanical explanation of things. As Aristophanes found Zeus dethroned and *Vortex* reigning in his stead, so now Positivism has preached that the reign of metaphysics and theology has ended, and Professor Huxley bids us look forward to a time when man will be seen to be only the "cunningest of nature's

clocks." This movement, commonly called the Enlightenment or *Aufklärung*, has been met, both in ancient Greece and in modern Europe, with a powerful protest not only from those who, like Aristophanes, represent the tradition of the beliefs attacked, but also from those who, like Plato, have maintained that these beliefs represent in an imperfect form perennial truths which can be dissociated from that form. It is, therefore, instructive for us to observe what was Plato's attitude towards the enlightenment of his day: a point on which his great work, the *Republic*, casts a very clear light. On the one hand, we find Plato acknowledging the necessity of the poetic or imaginative expression of religious ideas, the necessity of the 'noble untruth' of mythology, as a means of culture in the infancy of the individual and the nation. He maintains that religious ideas can be conveyed to men's minds, in the earlier stage of their development, only in an objective and external form, and that poetry is necessary to elevate and idealise that form and to make it as adequate as it is capable of becoming, to the truth of which it should be the embodiment. Men will not, he thinks, be capable of grasping the idea in itself if they have not first grasped it in a symbol, which, even as interpreted by feeling, may suggest, but cannot fully express it. On the other hand, he holds it to be inevitable that such unspiritual ways of expressing spiritual truth should,

in the advance of reflexion, become a stumbling-block to those who have received their first teaching through them. Doubt or unbelief in the facts or mythically exalted facts, to which a divine meaning has been attached, must inevitably arise; and at first it will seem impossible to separate the ideas from the vehicle through which they were given. To use Plato's own metaphor, the maxims of our supposed parents will lose their authority, when it is discovered that we have been obeying them under an illusion, and that we are not really *their* children. The whole religious view of life, with all that is based upon it, will seem to be discredited, when the outward form through which it came to us can no longer be taken to be exactly and literally true. Plato recognises this danger, but has no other suggestion to make than that in the Ideal State the youth should be kept from the study of dialectic—*i.e.* that the reflective, questioning activity of the understanding should not be awakened in him—till his moral development has considerably advanced. Young men, prematurely excited to question received authority, are like "puppy dogs that tear everything to pieces." Hence the philosophical enlightenment that discredits the first forms under which a higher truth has been presented to them, should be postponed, till, by the moral discipline of social life, they have become able to bear the shocks of reflexion without losing their faith. By the time

that they have received this discipline, they will, Plato thinks, be ready also to appreciate a philosophy, which shows the imperfection, and even, in a sense, the fictitious character of the vehicle through which the divine idea is first conveyed to men, but which at the same time proves that that idea rests on a rational basis.

From the point of view we have now reached we can understand at once the nature of the difficulty, and the necessity of adopting something like Plato's solution of it. The difficulty lies essentially in the inadequacy of the forms in which the consciousness of God is at first expressed, in so far as these are the forms of the ordinary, objective consciousness; and the solution must lie in a recognition of the difference between the two forms of consciousness, and at the same time of the relation that binds them to each other. So long as the divine, the infinite, the universal, the spiritual, is taken as standing on the same level with the finite, the particular, the material; so long, in short, as God is conceived as an object which occupies a definite and exclusive place among other individual objects in the world of sense, so long it is impossible to prevent these two forms of consciousness from coming into collision with each other. And when they do come into collision, it is inevitable that in the long run the consciousness of the finite should prevail; for *it* is, so to speak, on its *own*

ground, while the religious consciousness is on the ground of the enemy. What Aristotle objected to in Plato's ideas, that they were ἀϊδία αἰσθητά, 'eternal things of sense'—at once finite things and eternal realities—may with much more ground be alleged against a mode of thought which intercalates divine, or spiritual, existences in the natural world, as if they were of the same order with other natural beings. Whether that intercalation takes place in the simple Homeric way in which the gods are brought into the field of battle, and sometimes even allowed to exchange blows with mortal combatants, or in the more common form of a belief that the divine manifests itself, not in nature as a whole, but rather in occasional breaches of the order of nature, is not of much consequence. In both cases it brings with it the same difficulty. It treats the spiritual as a reality of the same order with the natural, and thereby brings it into collision with the natural. If the divine reality be identified with some of the things of sense as against others, it must be brought under the criteria which are applicable to things of sense. Yet these criteria cannot be applied to it without making it contradict its very nature as divine. The physical form of presentment will thus obscure and ultimately obliterate the spiritual reality which is confined to it; and the belief in the divine as a thing of sense, will turn into a disbelief in everything *but* the things of sense.

The strength of Positivism,—using the word in the narrower sense in which it implies the negation of all theology and metaphysic, and of the existence of the objects to which theology and metaphysic relate, at least as objects knowable by us,—lies just in this, that it seeks to carry out thoroughly the process of freeing the natural world from spiritual interferences. It is called *Aufklärung*, or Enlightenment, because it is opposed to every kind of belief in the spiritual or divine which identifies it with the miraculous, the arbitrary, the lawless, or the unintelligible; because, so to speak, it carries its candle into every chamber of the house, and insists on leaving no dark corner unvisited in which ghosts might be supposed to lurk. As it developed, and for the first time systematically developed, a consciousness of law and order in the world—of the definite connexion of causes and effects by which finite objects are related to each other—so it emancipated the human mind from the superstitious tendency to attach to these objects the reverence due to the infinite. With this clearing process, however—this war against superstition—there was combined a tendency to narrow man's intellectual horizon, to limit his interests in a way which is fatal to religion, and which does not leave much room for poetry. For the Enlightenment not only removed spiritual reality from a sphere to which it did not properly belong,

or divested it of a sensuous vesture which hid its true nature; it also led to the denial that there is in human experience any room for spiritual reality at all, except as an illusion of the infancy of the individual or the race.

To do justice to this movement, however, we must look at it on all sides, and consider more definitely both its merits and its defects. Let me, therefore, in the *first* place, explain what exactly is the nature of the positive view of things which the Enlightenment brought with it. Let me, in the *second* place, show how this positive view of the objects of finite experience is connected with a negative view of all that seems to be beyond the range of such experience. When we have clearly apprehended these two points, we shall be in a better position to judge whether objects conceived as in space and time are the only objects of which knowledge is possible; and, if not, what is the method by which we can attain to a knowledge of a higher kind.

What is the positive or, as we may call it, the scientific view of nature? It is impossible here to give a complete account of it, but for our present purpose it seems sufficient to say, after Kant, that it is a view of things which is governed mainly by the forms of time and space, and by the principles of substance, causality, and reciprocity. It takes the world as a collection of particular objects in space

going through changes in time, and it traces all these changes to the action and reaction of these objects according to invariable laws; so that under the same conditions the same results must invariably happen. This scientific conception of universal laws of change seems at first to contradict all the usual assumptions of our first sensuous consciousness; for, as we have seen, the sensuous consciousness tends to treat all things and beings as mere individuals, and to regard their relations to each other as accidental and arbitrary. Yet, on closer examination, science is found to agree with that consciousness in its most important characteristics, and to differ from it, so far as it does differ, mainly by making explicit its secret presuppositions. In the very earliest utterances of man's thought we find him practically using all the principles by which science is guided, or at least asking questions of nature which show that his mind is governed by them. The difference between this earliest consciousness of man and the scientific consciousness is only that the former does not use these ideas reflectively; *i.e.* it is not aware of the principles which it presupposes and therefore it cannot apply these principles consistently and accurately. The ideas that prompt and guide the action of our intelligence, are not, in the first instance, set before us as rules; and, so long as this is the case, their application is necessarily uncer-

tain and arbitrary. In this way we can explain how the questions, which the awaking intelligence is driven by its own nature to ask, are at first answered in so superficial and inadequate a way; and how the most eager curiosity as to the nature and causes of things, should yet be accompanied by an all-accepting credulity which is satisfied with any idle fable that for the moment stops the gap. Having got the tortoise on which to base the earth, the savage never asks for the elephant to support the tortoise. It is only after the principle of explanation has been separated from the facts and considered for itself, that criteria of the validity of such explanations begin to be laid down. It is only then that the mind ceases to be content with the first crude hypothesis that is presented to it; and, seeing the defects of that hypothesis, begins to ask how a more adequate one can be attained.

Let me state this thought again in a slightly different point of view. Judging by early mythology, man would at first seem to have little or no idea of a reign of law in the world, or of any necessity of connexion between its phenomena. Rather, he seems to regard all things as isolated particulars, which *might* have existed by themselves, and which only at times accidentally and arbitrarily interfere with each other. The individuality, or rather particularity, of things is to him their

primary aspect, and their relativity is only secondary. So little notion has he of a definite order and connexion of things that we cannot say that he believes in miraculous interferences with the course of nature; for, as yet, there is for him no regular course of nature from which miracles could be distinguished. The world seems to be a scene given over to the play of chance and arbitrary will. Only gradually and by long experience does there arise a sense of definite connexion between particular events to modify that apparent contingency before which thought stands paralysed.

But, while all this is true, it nevertheless leaves out of account one thing, namely, that the principle, which leads to the systematic view of the connexion of nature, is already present, and that it is its presence that stimulates the mind to those inquiries, to which the first mythological view of the world is a kind of answer. For, confused and arbitrary as that view seems to us now, it is the first effort of the intelligence to bear up against the multiplicity of impressions which are streaming in upon it by every sense, and to connect them together in a rational way. A mythology, however chaotic it may be, is thus an attempt to find the unity of the mind in the world; the only attempt which is possible to the undeveloped consciousness of those who are still intellectually children. From such a mytho-

logical explanation of the world to the scientific conception of an order of necessity, binding all things together, there is a continuous advance, which can only be explained by saying that it is due to the restless and persevering effort of thought to find a more and more adequate answer to the questions, which it is forced by its own nature to ask. Between the legend of the South Sea Islands about the hero who crept out of a cave in the earth and employed his youthful energies in the task of lifting up the heavens, which hitherto had lain flat upon the earth, to their proper place, so as to make room for mankind to move and live,—between this legend and the Newtonian theory of gravitation the gap is wide enough; but it is the same search for causes, that gave rise to this myth and to many improved editions of it, and that finally sets them all aside to make room for the mechanical theory of the universe.

Now the process by which the idea of law or necessary connexion among all the objects of sense is gradually established, is necessarily also a *sifting* process, by which the religious elements are gradually eliminated from our ordinary consciousness of the finite world. The first step in this sifting we have already described. It is one by which certain objects are fixed upon as realities of a higher order, or by which certain *new* objects are constructed by the

imagination, and endowed with a kind of ideal completeness and independence. These idealised objects, however, are still regarded as parts of the same natural system to which other objects belong; and there is as yet no clear sense of the inconsistency of bringing the two kinds of objects, so to speak, into the same plane, or of making them directly collide with each other. Generally, there is a tendency to look for the operation of the gods in abnormal phenomena, in strange coincidences of events and sudden overturns of fortune, rather than in the ordinary course of nature; or again, in great impulses or inspirations by which, for good or evil, the soul of man is carried out of itself, rather than in the ordinary processes of mental life. But, in such a stage of culture as is represented by Homer, these influences and interferences are scarcely regarded as miraculous. They are still reckoned to be a part of the regular order of things, though a part that attracts special attention, as the revelation of a higher agency than is elsewhere manifested.

As, however, the consciousness of the order and connexion of nature becomes more distinct, and the idea of God gains greater purity and elevation, it becomes more difficult to combine the two into one, or simply to intercalate the supernatural in the natural. On the one hand, the divine, now distinctly conceived as the infinite and the universal, separates

itself more entirely from all finite objects; and its direct interference thus comes to be regarded as rare and exceptional. God comes more and more to be thought of as standing apart in his sacredness, exercising a superintendence over all things, but not immediately interfering with special objects and events except when there is a *dignus vindice nodus*. On the other hand, the idea of what Kant calls the 'thorough-going connexion of experience' becomes developed, so as more and more to exclude the operation of chance or arbitrary will. An order of necessity is distinctly recognised, and, therefore, any intrusion of a divine or spiritual agency is now viewed as definitely miraculous. And from this it is not far to the conviction, to which science is continually adding new strength, that such intrusion is impossible. Thus the ranks of physical causation seem to close up, and to leave no room for supernatural agency. Every fact comes to be regarded as an essential element in a whole, which could not be other than it is without a change in its conditions, and in the conditions of those conditions *ad infinitum*. The hyssop could not grow on the wall if the whole world could prevent its growing, and it grows because the whole world conspires to make it grow just there. Every change is an essential link in a chain, or rather a mesh in a network, which connects it with all that precedes and all that coexists with it. To those who are filled with

this idea,—the idea that phenomena are what they are, and change as they do change, only because of their relations to other phenomena, and ultimately to the whole world of experience,—it becomes hard to give credence to any exception, to any break in the unity of nature; and still harder even for a moment to realise the possibility of that mingling of heaven and earth which was so easy a thought to Homer, and which seemed quite rational even to the highest minds of the Middle Ages. In modern times, such a 'peace of God,'—such a truce between the natural and the supernatural as allows them both to occupy the same field of experience on almost the same terms,—is not capable of being maintained. Those who believe that miracles have happened, are at least anxious to reduce them to a minimum, and to free their creed from the burden of all that is not strictly necessary to it. On the other hand, science has become more confident in its principles, as those principles have led to greater triumphs in the discovery of nature's secrets. Conscious that it has verified the necessary interconnexion of phenomena over a very wide field, and that it is continually extending its researches into new regions by the aid of the same method, it is more and more impatient of all beliefs that still stand in the way of the acknowledgment of the universality of that method. Hence it steadily seeks to banish the infinite from the sphere of the finite, and even to reduce the infinite to a

nominis umbra. Thus it was with the Deism of last century which, while it interpreted every phenomenon by relation to another phenomenon, and protested against all teleological explanations, still left at the end a *Supreme Being*, of whom we know nothing except that He *is.* And Mr. Spencer's unknowable Absolute, of which we have "a consciousness but no knowledge," is only another word for the same idea.

Now I reserve for another lecture the task of pointing out the defects of this conception of our relation to the divine, and also of showing how these defects may be corrected. For the present I will conclude with two reflexions.

The first is, that if the result of our scientific progress were to reduce the idea of God to that of an unknowable *Être Suprême*, religion would have no special interest in this spectre of its former greatness. For all it does is to preserve the consciousness that the finite cannot be conceived as a *res completa*,—a whole bounded and terminated in itself. But if all that can really be known, all that can be made into a real interest of life, is assigned to the finite, the idea that there is a 'beyond' to which we can attach no definite predicate, can scarcely be considered of any practical importance. The consciousness of *such* an infinite would even seem to be the gift of an unfriendly destiny; for, so far as we paid any regard to it, it

would tend to make us despise our proper work and all the aims to which our life is necessarily confined. It would be like a glimpse of a world beyond his prison walls to a prisoner who could never escape, and whose only wise course would be to shut his eyes to it and make the best of his bondage. And, indeed, if we cannot regard ourselves as anything but 'parts of this partial world,' links in an endless chain of necessity by which finite is bound to finite, it seems inexplicable that our minds should ever be mocked by the idea of anything that is not included in that world.

The same condemnation must be applied to the effort, encouraged by some writers, to get back by imagination some portion of that religious belief which is supposed to be for ever lost to the reason. The surest result of the Enlightenment is that the imaginative forms, in which man's first religious consciousness embodies itself, are deprived of all credit, owing to the impossibility either of taking them as literally true, or, consistently with the principles on which the enlightenment rests, of suggesting any way in which they can be shown to have a true element in them. Hence it is impossible to take seriously the advice of writers like Lange, who tell us still to cherish, for their practical value, those poetic representations to which we can no longer attribute any scientific truth.

How can we regard as *practically* true conceptions which are acknowledged to be *theoretically* false; or satisfy our soul with visions which we admit to be unreal? If it were once established that all that is in any way knowable by us is included in the thorough-going connexion of experience, it would become idle to indulge in dreams of anything that refused to take a place in that connexion. By its very nature the imagination works under the sensuous conditions of space and time; and, in regard to all objects *in* space and time, the law of nature and necessity is, *ex hypothesi*, supposed to be absolute and without exception. And the untruth of representing objects as real, which yet are not subjected to this law, ceases to be 'noble,' so soon as it is not regarded as pointing to a deeper truth. For as poetry is not ordinary fact, so in the impossibility of knowing anything but such fact, it can be nothing else but a pleasing fiction, an anodyne by which we may console ourselves for a time, but which, like other anodynes, will produce its effect only by making us forget the reality of things. And perhaps a noble mind will rather refuse such consolations, will refuse to accept the myrrh-drugged wine of poetic fiction, merely as a means to escape from its misery, and will prefer to endure its cross with a clear consciousness of its pain. Poetry had a noble office, when

the ideas of an earlier time made it interchangeable with prophecy, the revelation of a truth higher than truth of fact; but, if these ideas should utterly disappear, if poetry could be regarded merely as the fictitious product of an imaginative faculty, whose only value was that it supplied a temporary rest for our sensibility, and for a time *ideally* emancipated us from limits from which we can never *really* escape, it would soon lose all its power and inspiration. No great art could ever live, if it ceased to regard beauty as one with truth and goodness. No poet ever touched the deepest springs of human emotion, who regarded himself simply as the "idle singer of an empty day."

LECTURE TWELFTH.

THE LOGICAL JUSTIFICATION OF SUBJECTIVE RELIGION.

The Principle of Positivism—That it admits no Exceptions—That its Defect is its Abstractness—Complementary Principle of the Relativity of all Objects to the Subject—Appeal from the Objective to the Subjective Consciousness—The Argument from Desire—Kant's Distinction between the Desires of the Individual and the Postulates of Reason—"We Ought, therefore we Can"—Kant's Inference from this that the Summum Bonum *or Moral Ideal must be Realised—That this Inference underlies all Subjective Religion.*

In the last lecture I pointed out the nature of the movement which went formerly by the name of the *Aufklärung*, or Enlightenment, and which nowadays is more simply called Positivism; and I tried to show what is its strength and its weakness. Its strength lies in this, that it takes objects simply as such, and recognises that, as objects in one world, they are linked together in necessary relations. It carries out unflinchingly the idea of nature as a system of finite causes and effects, each of which is determined in its place, its time, and its character,

by its connexion with the rest. Hence it refuses to admit that there can be any hiatus in the series of finite causation, or that any element can be intercalated in it which does not belong to it. That any object should break away from the general conditions of objective experience, or should be endowed with an independence and completeness such as is inconsistent with these conditions, is to it an impossibility. Hence the poetic idealisation of special objects which lets them escape, so to speak, from the ranks of merely natural existences, and throw off the control of necessity—and, equally of course, the poetic creation of new objects which claim exemption from such limits of finitude—is regarded as an entirely fictitious process. Such mythical creations, whether they be due to the imagination of a particular poet, or to the unconscious working of the poetic instinct in a nation, are not fact, and, therefore, not truth; for Positivism does not admit that there is any truth but the truth of fact. What is not fact is fiction; and as men have now learnt what are the criteria of fact, they must reject as fiction everything that will not submit to these criteria, everything that does not fit itself as a finite link into the connexion of experience. Every object which exempts itself from the limits of finitude, every event that breaks the chain of natural necessity, is *ipso facto* proved to be an illusion, and belief in it may be at once set aside as superstition.

Is there any possibility of escaping this logic by maintaining that the laws of nature are subject to exception, or that its course is broken in upon at particular points by supernatural agencies? I am bound to say that I do not think so. I do not think that we can admit *in general* the mode of thinking represented by the Enlightenment of last century, and by the Positivism of the present day, and then say that, here and there, whether in a few or in many instances, the objective connexion of nature is interrupted by agencies that are outside of the system of nature. If a miracle is a breach of the order of nature, it is a fact that will not submit to the only criteria by which such facts can be determined. If, therefore, I venture to challenge the view of things to which this mode of thought leads, it is on other grounds; not on exceptional grounds which apply to this fact and not to that, to this object and not to that, but on grounds which apply equally to all facts and all objects. I should despair of finding evidence of a principle which transcends the necessity of nature, if that necessity were of itself sufficient to give a complete account of anything. I should not expect to find what is above nature anywhere, if there were not something above nature everywhere. If materialism by the aid of the atomic or any other mechanical theory can furnish a complete rationale of the simplest physical fact, it may still be far away from an explan-

ation of the universe, but it will have got over its greatest difficulty. On the other hand, it would be a fatal mistake for any spiritual or idealistic philosophy —if by idealism we mean the doctrine that the ultimate explanation of the world is to be found in a rational principle kindred to the soul of man,—to admit that the general course of things is to be explained by nature and necessity, and that the need for a higher explanation arises only when a break is made in that course. It would be dangerous for it even to admit that in such breaks we have better evidence of the existence of a higher power than is to be found in the ordinary course of things. If God must be conceived as revealing himself in the *whole* world, one object may still be higher, may contain more of Him than another, but there can be no absolute division between different objects, and no breach in the continuity of the process whereby He reveals himself in them all.

If this be true, then any attack upon the principle of Positivism, which seeks only to establish special *exceptions* to the course of nature, must be a failure. A supernaturalism which tries to survive alongside of naturalism, dividing the kingdom with it, will soon have taken away from it 'even that which it seemeth to have.' The only hope of a successful issue is to carry the war into the enemy's quarters, and to maintain what Carlyle called a *Natural Supernatural-*

ism,[1] *i.e.* the doctrine not that there are single miracles, but that the *universe is miraculous;* and that in order to conceive it truly, we must think of it, not as a mechanical system occasionally broken in upon from above, but as an organism which implies a spiritual principle as its beginning and as its end. The idealist must be prepared to show that the mechanical or external view of the world to which Positivism tends is an essentially imperfect view, a view which, no doubt, has its uses, and represents certain aspects of the truth, but which never can be taken as a final account of anything, not even of inorganic matter. He must, in short, be prepared to show that that view, though based upon premises which represent an important aspect of reality, yet involves a forgetfulness of other and even more important aspects of it; and that, therefore, its ultimate consequences, as they are derived from a partial hypothesis, are themselves hypothetical. In other words, they do not give us the whole truth in any one instance, and, therefore, can still less be taken as containing a true view of the universe as a whole.

Now it is impossible here to develop this thesis to its ultimate consequence; but one thing it is not difficult

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, iii. 8: "Innumerable are the illusions and legerdemain tricks of custom; but of all these perhaps the cleverest is her knack of persuading us that the miraculous, by simple repetition, ceases to be miraculous."

to show, viz. that Positivism rests on the ordinary objective view of things, in which no account is taken of their subjective aspect. Yet the object is essentially related to the subject, and it is an obvious fact that we never have the former without the latter. It is possible and natural that this element of our consciousness should at first escape our attention; for, as we have seen, our first consciousness so far loses itself in the object, that it is forced to regard even the self within us as a mere object; and, as a necessary consequence, it also reduces God, who is the principle of unity in subject and object, to the form of an object. At this late period of human history, indeed, the objective consciousness does not retain its original directness and simplicity. The general current of ordinary thought has been widened and modified by many streams of subjective reflexion which it has received into itself. Still the one-sided objective attitude of mind, the attitude in which the object, and nothing but the object, is distinctly recognised or attended to, is the common attitude of men. It is that attitude in which we all receive the first lessons of experience, and no one escapes from living more than half his life in it, however he may realise its inadequacy.

Nor, in this point of view, does science attempt to correct the error or inadvertence of the ordinary consciousness. In fact, it rather tends to increase that

error by the self-imposed limitations under which it pursues its task. The usual method of science in dealing with any complex problem is to break it up into as many simpler problems as possible, in order that it may lessen the difficulties to be encountered, and win the battle of knowledge in detail. As I showed in the first of these lectures, science seeks to isolate the element or aspect of reality which it would investigate, from all the other elements or aspects of it. It thus for a time deliberately accepts what it knows to be an untrue hypothesis, in order that it may avoid the impossible task of answering all questions at once. It deals with pure numbers, with simple geometrical figures, with absolutely rigid bars and perfect fluids, though it is well aware that all these are fictions of abstraction. In all this it pursues a legitimate end by perfectly legitimate means. But there is one thing which it is necessary for the scientific man always to remember, if he would not become the victim of his own method, and that is, that he *is* abstracting. For it is obvious that there are no things which are purely mathematical, or mechanical, or chemical in all their relations. There is no aspect or element of the real world which exists alone. Of none of them can we say what it would be, or whether it could *be* at all, if the others were removed. Science is, therefore, strictly speaking, *hypothetical*, *i.e.* it gives an account of certain elements,

as if they could be absolutely isolated; while yet we know that they never are isolated, nor, so far as we know, can be isolated from the rest. And from this follows an obvious consequence, viz. that we cannot either apply our science, or know what its results really mean, unless we *invert our abstracting process*, and recall the elements we have left out of account. We cannot apply the simplest mechanical rules without making allowance for the varied nature of our materials, and the varied conditions under which they are to be used. We cannot apply our abstract economical reasonings without considering that men are not creatures moved by the simple motive of a thirst for gain, but human beings living in families and states, and affected by each other in a thousand ways of which economic science takes no account. We cannot apply our anatomical knowledge to the explanation of the phenomena of life, if we do not remember that the body was dead when we dissected it; otherwise we are likely to find that the very process whereby we seek the truth has removed from our view the most important fact to be considered.

> "Wer will was Lebendigs erkennen und beschreiben,
> Sucht erst den Geist heraus zu treiben;
> Dann hat er die Theile in seiner Hand,
> Fehlt, leider! nur das geistige Band."[1]

[1] He who wishes to know and to describe a living thing, endeavours first to drive the soul out of it; then he has in his hands the separate parts; only the spiritual bond, unfortunately, is gone.

Nothing exists alone, and when we take it alone, we may be leaving out just what is essential to a true view of it. Hence the thought that divides is apt to lead to dangerous illusions, idols of the cave, if it be not corrected by the thought that reunites. Synthesis must complete the work of analysis, and give us back the whole which we have 'murdered in order to dissect.' We must restore the parts, which by the inevitable abstraction of science we have displaced and distorted, to their proper position and relations. And on the success of this process of restoration must it depend whether we get from science a true view of the world as a whole,—a view which is better than the confused unity of sense, because it distinguishes, and better than the onesidedness of the special sciences, because it reunites.

Now, among the elements of reality which are put aside or neglected by science, and which it is necessary to restore if we would have the truth of knowledge, is that of which we have been speaking, viz. the relation of all objects to a subject. Like the ordinary consciousness, and even more than the ordinary consciousness, science insists on a purely objective view of things. And here, too, the abstraction is useful and even necessary, so long as it is not forgotten that it *is* an abstraction. But this is just what Positivism forgets, when it attempts to universalise the mechanical view of nature and human

nature. It treats the world as if it were complete in itself without any knowing subject; whereas it is almost an Irish bull to say that, if there be such a world, we do not and cannot know anything about it. The conscious self may be an important or an unimportant element of experience, of that we are not in the first instance called upon to decide; at any rate, it is an essential element. In the drama of our experience, the Ego may be the Hamlet, or it may be only a walking gentleman: one thing is certain, it is always on the stage; and, if it were not, the play could not go on. And if we wish to complete our view of the facts, we must restore to its place the part we have omitted, and consider what difference its restoration makes. We must recognise that the whole truth of our experience is not summed up in what we call the facts of the objective world, even if we add all the laws of their connexion which science has discovered or ever can discover; but that, besides, we must take account of the no less certain fact of the subjective unity of the intelligence for which these facts exist. Any merely objective explanation of the world, however complete it may be, leaves out an essential element in it, and is therefore abstract and hypothetical. For we cannot know *a priori* that the reintroduction of the element left out will not change our whole view of the other elements. Even if science were able to give a complete account of the

world, and to explain all the relations of its parts on principles of mechanical necessity, it would not have secured the triumph of materialism. For it might well be that a careful consideration of the relation of this mechanically explained world to the mind that knows it, would invalidate or even invert all the results thus attained. A French writer has said that "if there were nothing but matter, there would be no Materialism." The very presence of the consciousness which is implied in such a theory, is a demonstration that the theory is incomplete; and therefore that, if it be put forward as a philosophical dogma as to the nature of things, and not merely as an hypothesis which it is useful for certain scientific purposes to assume, it is untrue.

There are two ways in which this result may be taken, and therefore two ways in which we may seek to advance beyond it. We may take it in a purely *negative* way, as a condemnation of all our knowledge in so far as it is based on an objective view of things; or, in other words, as a proof that the objective view of things can only at best give us a systematic account of phenomena or appearances, and not any knowledge of things as they really are. And from this we may draw the inference that, in order to reach the reality that is hid beneath these appearances, we must look inwards and not outwards, we must cease to study the out-

ward world and begin to study our own souls. Or, on the other hand, we may take it in a *positive* way, as a proof that the objective view of things, even when corrected and systematised by science, gives us an abstract and therefore an imperfect knowledge of them, because it leaves out one and that the most important of their aspects. We may argue, therefore, that the intelligible world cannot be understood, unless we take into account its relation to the intelligence; and we may attempt to reach the truth by bringing back the element thus omitted. We may thus seek to reinterpret the results of our objective knowledge of the world in the light of a fact which science neglects and which Positivism would exclude. If we adopt the former alternative, we shall be led to oppose the subjective to the objective view of things, and to assert the inner at the expense of the outer life. In other words, our weapon against materialism will lie in showing that the world of matter is a world of appearance, and that it is only as we withdraw upon the inner world of thought that we can apprehend the reality of things. If we adopt the latter alternative, we shall be led to regard the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective, as abstract elements of reality, which can only be understood when seen in their unity with each other. And our weapon against materialism will

be the proof that matter itself is relative to spirit, and that, therefore, neither can be understood as what it really is, till it is seen as a factor in the development of spiritual life.

Now, after what has been said in a former lecture, I need scarcely repeat that these two ways of thinking are not, strictly speaking, alternatives, but rather, successive stages through which the mind passes in the course of its development. The one-sided objective view of things develops till its imperfection becomes manifest, and then it finds its natural corrective in a view which separates the subject from, and raises it above the object. And it is only when this view also has been thoroughly worked out, and has shown all its characteristic excellences and defects, that it becomes possible to reach a view which does justice to object and subject alike. Even religion, though it is essentially the consciousness of a unity which is beyond the difference of subject and object, and therefore always contains in itself a kind of anticipation of this last and highest view of things, has itself to pass through a predominantly subjective as well as a predominantly objective phase, ere it can reach an explicit apprehension of that unity, or, as I have previously expressed it, ere it can know God in the form of God.

It is the second of these phases of religion

which we have now to examine. But before dealing with it in the concrete form in which it presents itself in religious history, it may be useful to consider a little more closely the inner logic of it, the secret movement of thought which it involves. Subjective religion is, in the *first* place, the surrender of the outward world, and of the external course of things to fate, to the law of nature and necessity, or, at least, to some power or principle which is not regarded as divine, and may even be regarded as essentially opposed to the divine. And it is, in the *second* place, the appeal to something within us, something that is bound up with the inner consciousness of self, as the revelation of the highest, the authentic voice of God. It is the religion of subjectivity, of moral aspiration, of prophecy; the religion for which the ideal is opposed to the real, yet in a sense conceived to have a higher reality. It is a religion which sets the demands of the heart, the conscience, or the reason, above all the facts of outward experience. Thus when Tennyson, disgusted with the conclusions to which materialistic science seems to be driving him, cuts the knot by declaring that—

> "Then, like a man in wrath, the heart
> Stood up and answered, 'I have felt,'"

he is speaking the language of subjective religion, and claiming that an inward conviction should out-

vote all outward experience. Again, when Iphigenia, in Goethe's tragedy, meets the objection—

"It is no God that speaks, 'tis only thine own heart,"

with the instant answer—

"'Tis only through our hearts the gods speak to us,"

she is setting her own inward ideal against the apparent reality, and claiming that the former should be trusted against all evidence derived from the latter. And Kant is only translating the poetry of such passages into prose when he asserts that the conviction that we *ought* to do any act, is a sufficient evidence that we *can* do it; and even calls upon us to believe in God and immortality, because a God must exist to realise the moral ideal, and because there is no room fully to realise it within the bounds of mortal life. He is, in fact, asserting that the Good is the True, that the highest moral ideal is at the same time the ultimate reality of things, and that, in short, our subjective consciousness of that which 'ought to be,' is at the same time our best definition of that which '*is*.' On this view our inner recoil against immediate reality is believed to carry us beyond it to a deeper reality; the demand which our spirits make, that the facts should yield to our ideal, is taken as itself a proof that they are illusive, phenomenal, or transitory; and that, therefore, in one way or another, they are to be put out of

court in our ultimate judgments as to the real nature of things and of the Divine Being on whom they depend.

Now, how can such a way of thinking be justified? It is easy to see that it may be morally profitable; for a belief in the existence of goodness often does good to him who entertains it, even when the individual believed to be good has none of the virtues attributed to him. Love may be directed to an unworthy or commonplace object, but none the less does its idealising power elevate the character of the lover. And sometimes we may say without any cynicism that the dream is so much beyond the reality, that it is no ill fortune for the dreamer if it remain unrealised. Is it not the fruits that are never enjoyed, or that are prematurely snatched from our lips, which retain immortal sweetness? Desire is always prophesying its own complete satisfaction; and it requires only a slight suggestion from without to connect the idea of such satisfaction with an object which, if real at all, has no reality corresponding to the hopes that are attached to it so long as it is unattained. And, if it is never attained, its finitude may never be discovered. But in such cases the beauty lies, if anywhere, in the eye that sees it. The good sought is nowhere, if not in the soul that seeks it. Might we not even quote the words of Scripture in a changed sense, and say that "faith is the substance of

things hoped for," their *only* substance? Is it not the commonplace of moralists that life is a hunt after illusions, which are found out whenever they are caught,—an experience which would soon produce despair, were it not for what Goethe calls the 'unconquerable levity' of man, with which he substitutes a new illusion for the one that has been found out, and were it not that there are some shadows that are never caught?

Now, what reason is there for attaching higher credit to such subjective evidence in religion? If we find men worshipping what they admire, and bestowing the throne of the universe upon a being who realises what they wish for—or at least, what they wish for in their best moments, and think they ought always to wish for—does this show anything except that, as Feuerbach says, the gods are 'the wishes of men thought of as already realised'? Why in the case of religion should we regard such a conversion of the subjective into the objective with a respect which we do not pay to it in any other sphere? Our desires and longings, at least when they reach a certain degree of intensity, recalcitrate against the idea of their own subjectivity. They are incredulous of the unreality of their objects, and hold out against the strongest evidence of such unreality, almost with the same instinctive revolt with which we listen to a story that reflects discredit

upon the character of a trusted friend. In such a case men have often felt that they could outvote the world in the strength of their solitary conviction. "My life upon his faith!" But what right have we to treat the great Power of the universe, as if it were a friend whose character is so intimately known to us that we feel certain he cannot deceive? Is not such a belief an extension of our first natural mistake of thinking all things centred in ourselves, a mistake which is seen in an exaggerated form in childhood with its unreasonable demands, that would grasp at the sun and moon and expect them to become its playthings? Is it not the lesson of experience that the world goes its own way, and that we cannot make it accommodate itself to us, but that we must accommodate ourselves to it?

The argument from desire is, undoubtedly, one to which recourse is often had by writers who are trying to find some philosophical justification for the religious sentiment, and especially for the demand of our spiritual nature for something more than any finite satisfaction. Thus Dante, in a remarkable passage, pictures man's insatiable thirst for knowledge, which cannot be satisfied by anything less than the attainment of absolute truth. At the foot of every certainty, he declares, a new doubt springs up, and so drives us to seek beyond every truth for a still deeper truth; and then he adds that the possibility of our

finally reaching absolute truth is not to be questioned; for, if it were not possible, then "all desire would be vain and meaningless." In this, as is often the case with Dante, he is just repeating the words of the great Angelic Doctor, Thomas Aquinas, who declares that "if the rational intelligence of the creature could not attain to the first cause of things, natural desire would remain empty and ineffectual." In the same spirit Pascal speaks of man, as a being 'cribbed, cabined, and confined' by the conditions of his earthly existence—a being whose destiny in this world brings with it no good which is adequate to his deepest wants; whose nature, therefore, must be taken as prophetic of another sphere for which it is preparing, and in which alone it will have full scope. And Goethe's great dramatic poem, *Faust*, has a similar theme. The devil deceives himself when he undertakes to satisfy man with earthly food, and Faust is saved because he cannot thus be satisfied. "The man who is ever striving, ever endeavouring after some higher good, him," says the song of the angels, "we can redeem or deliver from the powers of evil."[1] Whom neither the devil nor the world can satiate, God must satisfy.

Now, whatever the value of this argument, we cannot accept it simply as it is stated. Before we can

[1] Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,
Den können wir erlösen.

even admit that it has any validity at all, we must find some way of distinguishing between the chance desires, which are continually arising within us to meet or to miss a chance satisfaction, and those higher longings which, as it is maintained, carry with them the assurance of the reality, and the attainableness of their objects. We must be able to show why we do not put man's aspiration to the infinite in the same class with those random wishes for the impossible, which every day we set aside, in obedience to the common sense that makes us recognise their inconsistency with the conditions and limits of our earthly existence. There is, indeed, an obvious difference between the desire for the knowledge of God or for the realisation of the kingdom of heaven—for the attainment, whether in this world or another, of a perfect state, in which sin and misery shall be done away, and the last enemy death shall be destroyed—between desires like these, and the desire for any finite good; say, for the attainment of immense riches or power. But, at first, the difference seems to be in favour of the practical possibility of realising the latter, rather than the former. For desires for a finite good, however great, do not carry us beyond the limits of experience. The wish to be a king or even a millionaire is dependent for its realisation on a thousand contingencies; but there is a calculable, though, it may be, an almost infinitesimal chance,

that these contingencies may meet together in my individual case. "Being a man," says Sancho Panza, "I may come to be Pope, and much more easily governor of an island."[1] On the other hand, it might seem that the distinguishing characteristic of those higher desires of which we have been speaking, is just that, on empirical grounds, there is not even a chance, or, at least, the means of calculating a chance of their fulfilment; seeing that to think of them as fulfilled, is to go beyond all the conditions of experience, on the basis of which alone we can calculate anything. Why should our faith in the prophetic power of our desires, turn into a confident expectation, just when they become transcendent, and carry us altogether beyond the region of the calculable? Why should we reject as unreasonable all wishes which somewhat strain the limits of finite possibility, and count supremely reasonable those which, as it were, break the mould of experience in which all our ordinary hopes and fears are cast, and refuse to express themselves except 'under the form of eternity'? Is not this another example of the *credo quia impossibile*, which we can explain only on Kant's principle that what is altogether beyond experience, is for that very reason safe from being refuted by experience?

Now I have already indicated how these difficulties

[1] *Don Quixote*, First Part, iv. 47.

would be met by one who, like Kant, takes his stand at the point of view of subjective religion. In the first place, he would set aside the argument from outward experience as irrelevant. The world of experience, he would argue, is merely a world of appearances, which have no reality except for the self to whom they appear: it is a system of objects, which are themselves essentially related to the subject that knows them. But this subject cannot, without reasoning in a circle, be included in the system which presupposes him. The self to which all appears cannot be one of the appearances of its own subjectivity: the subject, as Kant argues, cannot be brought under the laws by which it determines and connects the objects of its knowledge. Although, therefore, outward experience does not afford any evidence for those beliefs and hopes which are connected with our moral consciousness, no shadow of doubt is thereby cast upon those beliefs and hopes themselves. We could not expect that our objective consciousness, which has to do only with the relative and phenomenal, should supply any evidence for ideas that reach beyond the sphere of the relative and phenomenal. But neither can it give us any reason to reject such ideas, if evidence for them should be found elsewhere in our inward consciousness of ourselves. The astronomer who swept the heavens with his

telescope and found no God, had proved nothing except that God is not an object of outward experience. Setting aside, therefore, all objections derived from such experience, we can listen undisturbed to the voice of reason within us; for it is only in the inward forum of self-consciousness that we cease to deal with the appearances of sense, and are brought into contact with the essential reality of things.

But, in the second place, the defender of subjective religion has to meet the objection that the inner oracle to which he appeals is at least ambiguous. For, when we turn our eye upon ourselves, we find within us many impulses which obviously have no objective reality corresponding to them. Kant, therefore, tries to show that there is an essential distinction between our ordinary wishes—the wishes which spring out of our natural individuality and out of the particular circumstances of our environment—and those desires which arise directly out of our rational and moral nature, our nature as self-conscious beings. The former class of desires is bound up with our individual existence as sensitive beings in a world of sense, beings who are, therefore, acted upon by other objects, and stimulated to react upon them by the pleasures and pains which they occasion. The latter class of desires arises out of the pure consciousness of

ourselves as subjects, and is, therefore, independent of all the conditions of our individual existence. For when we abstract from all such empirical relations of our being, we yet do not find our inner life a blank. Indeed, it is just then, as Kant maintains, that we become most clearly conscious of certain desires or tendencies, certain demands of our rational nature, which we cannot suppose to be aimless without distrusting that rational principle which is the basis of all our certitude. In the language of Kant, they take the form of *Postulates of Reason*, postulates which reason entitles us to make, in the absence of any other evidence. Thus we postulate *God*, *freedom*, and *immortality*, not because we can prove them to be real, but because, as moral beings, we cannot do without them: because the attitude towards the world which we necessarily take up, when we regard ourselves as moral subjects, involves their objective reality. Kant does not shun expressing this belief in what seems its most paradoxical form. "The righteous man," he declares, "may say: I *will* that there should be a God: I *will* that, though *in* this world of natural necessity, I should not be *of* it, but should also belong to a purely intelligible world of freedom: finally, I *will* that my duration should be endless. On this faith I insist and will not let it be taken from me."

These statements were criticised by a certain Professor Wizenmann, who brought against them the same objection which has been stated above. In other words, Wizenmann pointed out that the feeling of want is the source of endless illusions, leading men to suppose that a satisfaction is provided for it in cases in which no such provision is made; and, still more frequently, making them attribute to some object a perfect adaptation to our wants, which it does not possess, which, perhaps, no object whatever possesses. And he went on to compare Kant's assertion—that we have a right to assume the possibility of the realisation of the moral ideal, or the existence of all the conditions which are necessary to its objective realisation—with the dream of a lover who attributes to the object of his affection all the excellences which he can conceive or desire, and which, perhaps, were never united in any one person. Kant replies: "I quite agree with Professor Wizenmann in all cases where the feeling of want is due to mere inclination. Such a want cannot postulate the existence of the object desired, even for him who feels it: still less can it be the ground of a postulate which is universal. In this case, however, we have a *want of reason*, springing not from the subjective ground of our wishes, but from an objective ground of the will, which binds every

rational being, and thence authorises him *a priori* to presuppose in nature the conditions necessary for its satisfaction." In other words, Kant holds that there are certain tendencies in us which do not belong to our nature as individuals, with special feelings determined by heredity and circumstance; but which are the pure expression of our rational nature, of that in us which lifts us above our finite and phenomenal individuality. And for these tendencies we may reasonably expect, nay, we have a right to expect, to find a satisfaction provided. Thus there is in us a desire, not merely to have *our* wrongs righted and *our* happiness secured,—or even to see these ends attained by certain persons or classes in which we are interested,—but a desire to see right triumphant for the sake of right; a desire for the realisation of a social order in which universal goodness shall be joined to universal happiness, not because of any good which *we* might derive from it, but simply because we are obliged to think of such an order as highest and best. It is Kant's view that such desires, and such alone, carry with them the assurance of the possibility and, indeed, of the necessity, of their satisfaction. Thus the very universality, the infinite character, of the ends in question, which makes it impossible empirically to understand how they can be realised, is regarded by him, not as a reason to

doubt the possibility of their realisation, but rather as taking them altogether out of the category of ends, whose realisation need be a matter of doubt, or whose certainty is dependent upon calculation. We are obliged to regard them as the ends for which all things exist; and we cannot, therefore, reasonably ask by what special means they are to be attained.

With this agrees Kant's conception of the moral law itself, which, according to his view of it, carries with it the certitude that it can be realised by every one who hears its commands. For the central characteristic of the moral consciousness is that it lifts us above the region of calculation as to means and ends, and makes us set aside as irrelevant all questions as to the possibility of the actions it prescribes to us. The categorical imperative of duty is an absolute demand which is made upon us, or rather which we make upon ourselves, without any previous consideration as to what is attainable. The consciousness that we 'ought' is at once to be taken as sufficient evidence that we 'can.' When we think of life in this point of view, we are obliged *ipso facto* to throw aside our finite weights and measures; we cease to consult with flesh and blood; we defy augury and go forward trusting in our ideal without, and sometimes against, all calculation. We are to say with Hector: "It is the one best omen of success

that we fight for fatherland." We are to say with Danton: "Impossible! do not name to me that stupid word." The sense of power is not here to anticipate, but to follow upon the resolve to act. For it is futile to weigh spirit against matter, or to use at once the scales of worldly prudence and the standard of moral right. We are to assume that the former will adjust itself, like everything else in the world, to the latter. High moral achievement can never be attained by one who anxiously weighs the empirical considerations that make for and against the practicability of the course of action which he regards as best. "Impossible," says one of the bravest of Shakespeare's heroines, "impossible be strange attempts to such as weigh their pains in sense." Every great deed has seemed impossible till it was done. And even in the sphere of moral deeds which have no claim to the name of greatness, a certain courage of faith is constantly required of those that would act rightly. We cannot be true to ourselves unless we have the power, in any crisis where an important moral decision is necessary, to put aside the spirit of calculation, and to believe that fidelity to our best instincts will somehow carry us through.

But if this faith in the moral imperative be reasonable, we ought clearly to realise what it involves. It does not mean, strictly speaking, that "to do right is wisdom in the scorn of consequence,"

unless we are referring merely to the consequences to ourselves; for an act cannot, except by a false abstraction, be separated from its consequences. If it is reasonable that we should be called upon to listen to the demands of our conscience without empirically calculating the consequences, it must be on the ground that the conscience itself yields not only a higher, but a truer view of life than any empirical calculation could enable us to reach. In other words, it is rational so to act, because we are really taking a more complete and comprehensive estimate of things, and especially of our own highest interests, when we trust in what is called the ideal, than when we hold by what we usually call the real. If it is not a fair answer to the claim made in behalf of the moral law: "You ought, therefore you can," to reply: "I cannot, therefore I ought not," it must be because the reply comes from a less reliable source than the first assertion; in other words, the moral ideal is not a mere subjective dream of perfection, which has no relation to the possibilities of our actual human life; it is simply the actual itself, as seen in the light of a deeper reflexion, which detects the secret forces working in it. On this view, we are called upon to disregard what *is*, as against what *ought to be*, because, after all, our consciousness of what *ought to be* represents what in a deeper sense really *is*. In breaking with that

which is empirically calculable, we are breaking with superficial appearances that we may reach the truth of things. Hence also the obstructions which, in the former point of view, seem to make action impossible, are, in the latter, rightly regarded as shadows which can offer no effective resistance. For it is absurd to think that any power in the universe can ultimately defeat those who have the divine principle of the universe on their side. If, therefore, we admit the claims of the moral imperative to override or set aside experience, we must also admit the farther consequence that "morality is the nature of things," and that what Kant calls the 'postulates of reason' are true. In other words, the demands or aspirations which are connected with our consciousness of the moral ideal are not merely subjective wishes; they are our highest and truest revelation of the nature of the universe, and of that divine principle upon which it depends. And if God, freedom, and immortality be necessary postulates with a view to the realisation of the moral ideal, then they have for us the same evidence as the moral ideal itself.

Now, I have given this answer—which is substantially the answer of Kant—to the objections usually brought against subjective religion, not because I regard it as finally satisfactory, but because it throws light on the nature of the difficulties in which such religion is involved, and indicates the only way in

which those difficulties can be met with any show of reason. Kant, in fact, only makes explicit a process of thought which we can detect in all cases where appeal is made from outward experience to inward conviction, from consciousness to self-consciousness. In brief, his argument is that, when we abstract from outward experience and purify our minds from all those impulses which are due to our nature as objects and our relations to other objects,—when, that is, we leave out of account all that belongs to the phenomenal side of our being,—we still find within us, bound up with the practical consciousness of ourselves as moral beings, ideas of the *world*, the *soul*, and *God*, which have a higher truth than all our empirical knowledge. For it is this practical consciousness and its postulates which alone reveal to us what we really are, and what is our relation to God as the absolute Reality. It is thus for us the legitimate ground of a faith which goes beyond all our knowledge. Now, in this reasoning, Kant, as I have just said, is only making explicit the logic which underlies subjective religion in all its forms—from the extreme form of Buddhism, in which the subject is altogether torn away from the object, to the Judaic form, in which the latter is merely subordinated to the former, and even to the partial revival of the Judaic spirit in modern Protestantism.

It will, however, be easier to appreciate the merits and defects, the partial truth and the partial untruth of this mode of religious thought, after we have followed it out in the concrete, in the historical development of the different religions of this type.

LECTURE THIRTEENTH.

THE SUBJECTIVE RELIGIONS—BUDDHISM AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL RELIGION OF THE STOICS.

The Logic of Subjective Religion in Kant—How such Religion arises in the Life of Individuals and Nations—Development of Buddhism out of Vedic Pantheism—The Absolute Self of the Upanishads—The Great Deliverance of Buddha—Its Negative Character—Place of Universal Charity in its Moral Code—Subjective Movement of Greek Thought in Anaxagoras and Socrates—Partial Restoration of an Objective View of Things in Plato and Aristotle—Final Triumph of Subjective Individualism—Comparison of Stoicism with Buddhism—How Stoicism combines its Subjective Ethics with Religion.

In the last Lecture I explained Kant's way of vindicating morality and religion against the doctrine of what is now commonly called Positivism. Positivism, as a philosophical system, seeks to universalise the principles upon which science explains the phenomena of matter, and thereby to exclude from the world, or at least from the knowable world, everything that does not fall under the necessity of nature. Kant answers, not by denying the validity of the principles upon

which science is based, or by asserting the existence of any exceptions to the reign of law which it seeks to establish, but by showing that the system of nature implies a principle which is above nature. His first step, therefore, is to point out that all objects are relative to the conscious self, and that, this being so, the self cannot be brought under the laws it applies to objects. And his second step is to maintain that the pure consciousness of self is the source of a universal law, which binds us as subjects irrespective of special circumstances of our individual existence as objects, standing in definite relations to other objects. Furthermore, he maintains that with the consciousness of this law there necessarily goes a conviction of the possibility of realising it, and a belief in the existence of all the conditions that are required for such realisation. Thus, by our subjective consciousness of self we are lifted above the phenomenal world and all the limitations under which it exists as an object of knowledge; and, at the same time, we gain an insight —incomplete indeed, but certain—into a reality which is not phenomenal. We rise to faith in a God, who is fulfilling in the outward world the law of our spirits, and, therefore, to a certainty that the moral end to which that law points is attainable, and, indeed, that it will necessarily be attained.

My object in thus dealing with the Kantian theory, however, was not to criticise Kant, but

to show the nature of the subjective movement of reflexion, of which he is the greatest philosophical exponent. For the Kantian philosophy exhibits, in the clearest and most explicit form, the inner logic of the process which gives rise to the second of the three great types of religion of which we have spoken. In other words, it reveals to us the *rationale* of the change from objective to subjective religion. To the earliest consciousness of the individual and the race, nothing can present itself except in an external form. In this stage even the subject has to be conceived simply as one of its own objects; and, as a necessary consequence, God also, the absolute unity of subject and object, must find some outward form in which to reveal or to hide His infinitude. At the same time, even while this external way of representation prevails, it is not to be supposed that men are entirely satisfied with it. On the contrary, there is scarcely a single man who does not at times see or feel its inadequacy, although he may be at a loss to describe exactly what is wanting to it. Almost all men at some period or another,—most frequently in the crisis of youth, in which they first become intellectually awakened to the mystery of life,—recoil upon themselves from the inadequacy of the world. They may not be able, like Kant, to work out the objective view of things to its result, and explicitly to recognise where it fails. But the sense

of the transitoriness, the illusiveness, and the imperfection of the world, as it is revealed in our outward experience of it, throws them back upon themselves, and makes them seek within for what they fail to find without. They become for the time like subjective idealists in their sense of the solitariness of the individual soul, and their own image seems to stand between them and the world. Still more clearly we may trace the same movement in the history of the race. Fichte in Germany, and Carlyle in this country, have made it almost a common-place of the philosophy of history that there are two periods in national development, a period of intuition and faith, and a period of reflexion and criticism. In the former period the nation is occupied in forming its national beliefs, and expressing them in appropriate outward symbols; in building up its characteristic type of national institutions and customs, and in asserting itself against the world. In the latter period there is a decay of faith, a growing spirit of criticism, a relaxation in the energy of the political life of the people, and a feeling of discord with circumstances in individuals. At this stage the higher minds show an inclination to turn back upon themselves, to separate themselves from their social environment, to quarrel with the religious ideas and institutions which have been evolved by the national genius, and to seek a kingdom in their own souls. The spiritual life of

man thus takes on a subjective and individualistic colour. Morality ceases to be the acceptance of the social duties which arise out of the life of citizenship, and becomes the obedience of the individual to the inner law of his own being. Religion ceases to be the worship of a God who is revealed in outward nature, or in the social order of the family and the State, and becomes a reverence for a divine power that speaks only, or mainly, in the soul of the individual.

Now, as I have already said, the *second* type of religion thus originated is, like the first, abstract and imperfect. It must, therefore, give rise to the same conflict of matter and form which was fatal to the objective type; for the subjective without the objective is as unreal as the objective without the subjective. Still it remains true that the subjective movement indicates a relative advance in man's consciousness of himself, of the world and of God. For, although the mind turned back upon itself may become troubled and unhealthy, yet its pain and disease are necessary steps in the way to a higher life. He who has never got beyond the simple objective view of things, never felt the pains of inner loneliness, nor the agony of a self that cannot escape from its own shadow, is incapable of rising to that highest feeling of peace with God and man, which is not a sense of untroubled unity, but the consciousness of a unity won out of division, not

the mere instinct of natural affection, but a love born of the conquest of self. For the reflexion which breaks the *immediate* bonds of man to nature, and of man to man, is necessary to the development of that independent spiritual life, that consciousness of being a law and an end to ourselves, upon which alone a truly spiritual union can be based.

Now, if we confine our view to pre-Christian times,[1] there are *three* important examples of this kind of subjective religion and subjective morality which I am describing. These are (1) Buddhism, (2) the philosophical religion of later Greece, and most important of all, (3) the "ethical monotheism" of the Jews, as it manifested itself in the later prophets and the psalmists. Each of these has special peculiarities of its own, but they are all examples of that kind of religion which arises when man turns back from the objective to the subjective, and finds the voice of God mainly in the inner shrine of the heart. In this lecture I shall speak of the two former, reserving for the following lectures what I have to say of the religion of the Jews.

In Buddhism we have the first and extremest instance of recoil upon the subjective, a recoil, the vehemence of which is made more intelligible to us

[1] It will be shown in the sequel that there is a modified repetition both of the objective and of the subjective type of religion in the history of Christianity.

by the modern reproduction of it in Schopenhauer. In a former lecture[1] I spoke of the way in which the Vedic religion culminated in a pantheism which was also an 'akosmism,' *i.e.*, which regarded all the objective forms of nature as well as of human life, and all mythological idealisations of these forms which had been constructed by the imagination of the Vedic poets, —all finite things and beings, and all the deities formed in their image,—as parts of the great world-illusion. All this is an illusion of diversity and change, beneath which is concealed the one real being, permanent, unchangeable, and absolute; the one divine substance, of which, however, all we can say is, that it 'is.' Such pantheism is, as we have seen, the *euthanasia* of objective religion; for he who looks away from the particular to the universal, from sense to thought, must in the long run turn his eyes back from all objects to the self, as the one principle to which they are all equally related. Accordingly, in the Upanishads the absolute is already identified with the real Self, and the abstraction which lifts us above particular objects passes into the reflexion which makes us turn away from objects altogether, and direct our thoughts to the subject within us. As we read in the Katha-Upanishad,[2] "The Self-existent pierced the openings (of the senses) so that they turn forward; therefore man looks forward, not backward unto himself. *Some wise man,*

[1] Vol. i., p. 262. [2] Sacred Books of the East, xv. 15-19.

however, with his eyes closed and wishing for immortality, saw the Self behind." . . . "The wise, when he knows that that by which he perceives all objects in sleep and in waking is the great omnipresent Self, grieves no more." "As the sun, the eye of the whole world, is not contaminated by the external impurities seen by the eyes, thus the one Self within all things is never contaminated by the misery of the world, being himself without." "There is one eternal thinker, thinking non-eternal thoughts, who, though one, fulfils the desires of many. The wise who perceive him within their Self, to them belongs eternal peace, not to others." On this view, the external world is "the stuff that dreams are made of," and the outwardly directed eye sees not anything but illusion. Hence also the desires that objects awake in us are vain and illusive. For they are chains which, by uniting us to the transitory and illusory world, make us the victims of an outward fatality; and this fatality, according to the Indian belief, extends not only to one life, but to an unlimited series of lives, in which the individual returns again and again to the world of shows under different shapes. For, so long as desire continues, it binds him to the illusion of life. So long, therefore, he must revolve in the purposeless vicissitude of birth and death, escaping from one form of transitory existence only to be reimprisoned in another. "He who forms desires within his mind is born again through

his desires here and there."[1] To escape this fate, we must cut through the links of the chain that binds us to the wheel of necessity; we must close the openings of sense through which the outward world affects us, and root out the desires that make us seek an unreal happiness in it. Then, when we have done this, we shall be identified with "Brahman," with the Universal Self, the only Being which is absolutely real, and in which the satisfaction of the soul can be found. In this way alone can we reach that harmony with self which is at the same time harmony with God, and free ourselves from the false dream of individuality, which draws us onward through life after life in the endless vicissitude, yet endless repetition of the finite, continually tempting us with the hope of finding without, a good which can be found only within. For what we really seek far off in other objects is always near us: it is our very inmost self. "Verily a wife is not dear that you may love the wife; but that you may love the Self, therefore a wife is dear. Verily the worlds are not dear that you may love the worlds; but that you may love the Self, therefore the worlds are dear."[2]

This creed, taught already in the final philosophic interpretation of the Vedas, is the fundamental conception from which the religion of Buddha starts, and which he works out fearlessly to its ultimate conse-

[1] Sacred Books of the East, xv. 40. [2] *Id.* p. 109, cf. 163 *seq.*

quences. Struggle, pain, and evil are to Buddha the necessary results of desire, and desire itself is the necessary result of the illusion in which the soul that looks beyond itself is necessarily entangled. Hence the miserable existence of all finite creatures who permit themselves to be tempted onward through the endless transmigrations of a world of shows, in which they never meet with anything real or permanent. Who will deliver us from this endless vicissitude of emptiness? "No one," answers Buddha, "can deliver another, but each one by the aid of my doctrine, can deliver himself." In nothing is Buddha more emphatic than in thus sending everyone back upon himself. According to the "Book of the Great Decease," which appears to be one of the most authentic records of early Buddhism, Buddha answered the last appeal of his followers for more instruction by dwelling upon his own weakness, as the mere 'earthen vessel' through whom the great message had come, and by referring them to the light which each man can find in his own soul.

"What, then, Ananda? Does the order expect that of me? I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine: for, in respect of the truths, Ananda, the Tathâgata,[1]

[1] One of the names given to Buddha. Ananda is the 'beloved disciple' of Buddha, who stands nearest to his person.

has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher who keeps some things back. Surely, Ananda, should there be any one who harbours the thought, 'It is I who will lead the brotherhood,' it is he who should lay down instructions in any matter concerning the order. Now the Tathâgata thinks not that it is he who should lead the brotherhood, or that the order is dependent upon him. Why then should he leave instructions in any matter concerning the order? I, too, O Ananda, am now grown old, and full of years, my journey is drawing to a close, I have reached my sum of days, I am turning eighty years of age; and just as a worn-out cart can only with much additional care be made to move along, so methinks the body of the Tathâgata can only be kept going with much additional care. It is only, Ananda, when the Tathâgata, ceasing to attend to any outward thing, or to experience any sensation, becomes plunged in that devout meditation of heart which is concerned with no material object—it is only then that the body of the Tathâgata is at ease."

"Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge unto yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Look not for refuge to any one but yourselves."[1]

[1] Sacred Books of the East, xi. 37. Cf. the *Dhammapada*

Sir Edwin Arnold is therefore speaking in the true spirit of Buddha when he makes him exhort his followers to turn from outward seeming to the truth revealed within, in the following terms:—

"This is enough to know. The phantasms are
The heavens, earths, worlds, and changes changing them,
A mighty whirling wheel of shape and show
Which none can stay or stem.
Pray not. The darkness will not lighten. Ask
Nought from the silence, for it cannot speak!
Vex not your mournful mind with pious pains.
Ah! brothers, sisters, seek
Nought from the helpless gods by gift or hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruit and cakes.
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought,
Each man his prison makes.
Ye suffer from yourselves, none else compels,
None other holds you that ye live and die,
And whirl upon the wheel of change and turn
Its spokes of agony."[1]

The deliverance of Buddha is simple. It is to accept the doctrine that shows the illusion to be an illusion, and so to wither up the springs of all desires which presuppose that it is a reality. But this deliverance, as it is conceived by the Buddhist, carries him a step farther. For the subjective consciousness, which is thus freed from the illusion of objective existence,

§ 165 : Sacred Books of Asia, x. 46 : "By oneself the evil is done, by oneself one suffers ; by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another." Cf. the rest of ch. 12.

[1] The Light of the East.

is by the same process emptied of all its contents: those contents consisting just in its relations to objects. With the extinction of all relations, even negative relations, to objects, the subject itself would disappear. Hence for the Buddhist the last illusion to be destroyed is the existence of the individual self; for the desire that this individual self should be preserved is the root, or parent, of all other desires that enslave us to external things, and bind us on the wheel of change. The 'will to live' is the root of all evil, and the last enemy to be destroyed by him who is seeking for freedom from the sorrow of the world. Hence in loosing itself from outward things, the will must finally loose itself from itself. The illusion of life is the whole content of life, and therefore the self will itself disappear along with the shows against which it fights. Peace and rest for the weary are to be found, not in self-mortification, though that is on the way to it: not even in utter unselfishness or universal benevolence to all things that live, though that is far on the way to it: but only in the absolute dying out of the light of self-consciousness for want of fuel, the extinction of life and thought through the extinction of the will to live, the peace of *Nirvana* which is untroubled with any breath of vain desire, the peace of the 'dewdrop' which 'melts into the silent sea' never to be distinguished from it again.

This is the strange faith in which many centuries ago India found healing for its pains, and deliverance from the aimlessness and meanness of a life in which men were no longer bound together by effective national bonds or animated by worthy social ambitions. The nobler spirits of India—thrown back upon themselves from a world in which they could no longer see any divine power revealed, but only a vain cycle of meaningless change; in which an empty desire was ever re-awaking to be anew cheated by a transitory and unreal satisfaction—sought to find peace just by ridding themselves of every thought and feeling that was bound up with such a world. Nor did they shrink when they found that even the self must be extinguished in order to be freed from its pain. Hence the Buddhist rises to an all-embracing love or charity for all beings, immersed like himself in the pains of existence, only in the end to lose himself and all his fellow creatures in the empty peace of Nirvana, which is only not death because it is conceived so to speak as the death of death, the extinction of a life which is worse than death. Such an attitude of mind is explicable only as the extreme of the religion of subjectivity, in which even subjectivity loses its meaning. And from this also we are able to explain why Buddhism had power only as a protest or as a negative deliverance from the world,

which led to no positive regeneration of it. Subjective religion is valuable mainly as a stage of transition, from a lower religion which is merely objective, to a higher religion which is both objective and subjective. In the case of Buddha, however, the recoil was so violent that the movement of progress was broken off; and the result was to provoke a reaction against the creed which had emptied heaven of all its gods, and to bring about a return to the very superstitions which Buddhism had condemned and overthrown.

At the same time it is necessary to remember one thing in qualification of this judgment. It is always a little unfair to estimate any movement of religious thought in the light of its utmost logical consequences: for, at least in the first instance, the intellectual and moral value of such a movement depends mainly, not on the goal to which it tends but on the course which it takes in the endeavour to reach that goal; and also, we may add, on its relation to the earlier forms of religion which it opposes. Buddhism is primarily a protest against a superstitious polytheism, with the social disorganisation which accompanied it; but in its recoil upon the inner life of the subject, it overbalanced itself and ultimately lost all things, even the subject itself, in the silence of Nirvana. Yet, on the way to this result, it passes through

many moral and religious experiences which point to a higher idea of good than that which it finally reaches. Escaping from the pitfall of mere asceticism and self-torture, into which the Indian devotee was so apt to fall, Buddha declares that the austerities of the religious life may indicate the same impure and self-seeking spirit which is shown by the life of luxury, and, in short, that, "bodily exercise" in itself "profiteth nothing." "Not nakedness, nor platted hair, nor dirt, not fasting, nor lying on the earth, not rubbing with dust, not sitting motionless, can purify a mortal who has not overcome desires. He who, though dressed in fine apparel, exercises tranquillity, is quiet, subdued, restrained, chaste, and has ceased to find fault with other beings, he indeed is a Brahmana, an ascetic, a friar."[1] The true self-abnegation consists in a detachment from the world which makes it impossible for any outward thing to become our master. "Look upon the world as a bubble, look upon it as a mirage: the king of death does not see him who thus looks down upon the world."[2] And this detachment from personal feeling and desire is viewed at the same time as involving a universal sympathy, which, as it makes the joys and sorrows of others affect us equally with our own, leaves no room

[1] *Dhammapada*, §§ 141-2 : Sacred Books of the East, x. 38.
[2] *Id.* § 170.

for hatred or uncharitableness, for anger or revenge. Not even in the New Testament do we find the royal law, not to return evil for evil but to overcome evil with good, more explicitly announced than in the ethical writings of the Buddhists. Thus in the *Dhammapada* (or *Pathways of the Law*) we read, "'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,'—in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will *never* cease. 'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,'—in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred *will* cease. For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule."[1] "Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth."[2]

At the same time it is necessary to notice that the ground upon which this unselfish spirit is inculcated is purely negative, *i.e.* it is not the worth of the higher life of love, but the worthlessness of the lower life of selfish desire—the unreality and transitoriness of all finite good—upon which the main emphasis is laid. "The world does not know that we must all come to an end here; but those who know it, their quarrels cease at once."[3] What is the use of quarrelling about that which is worthless because it passes away? If, therefore, it be asked

[1] *Dhammapada*, §§ 3-5. [2] *Id.* § 223. [3] *Id.* § 6.

whether the Christian idea of charity is a higher thing than the Buddhist conception of a sympathy which passes over every barrier of caste and race and circumstance, and which in its universality embraces all men and even all animals, there is a ready answer. Buddhism, like the abstract Pantheism it opposes, has no distinguishing respect for the spiritual nature of man. It is a levelling doctrine which meets the indiscriminate 'Whatever is, is right,' of Brahmanism, with an equally indiscriminate 'Whatever is, is wrong.' It cannot set the qualities that make a man, above those that make a beast. And if its love extends to all men, and, we may even say, to all living beings, it is not that it regards them as having any real value in their individual existence, but that it looks upon them as all equally sufferers from the misery of existing. Hence it might be said that the universal charity of the Buddhist was only his *second highest* virtue; and that it held even so high a place as this only because such charity is the negation of all special regard for individual things. In its absence of personal feeling universal charity is nearest to that absolute silence of thought and feeling which is the extinction of the personal self. But it is in this natural extinction of self, and not in the moral extinction of selfishness which opens the way to the larger life of love, that the Buddhist finds the

highest bliss and perfection. Or, to take the most favourable view, these are not, in his mind, distinguished from each other.

Buddhism, then, may be taken as the *reductio ad absurdum* of subjective religion, for it is that extreme form of it in which it most clearly shows its onesidedness and imperfection; in which indeed the subjective movement is carried so far as to break off all connexion with the object, and therefore to empty the subjective life itself of all contents. It not only sets the ideal against the real, but absolutely opposes the former to the latter, and, as a necessary consequence, it makes the ideal purely negative. Hence also it distinguishes itself in a peculiar way from other religions of the subjective type. For, while *their* general defect lies in this—that they represent the Divine Being, who is properly the unity of object and subject, under the guise of an abstract subject, Buddhism carries the opposition of the subject to the object so far that it cannot admit their unity under any guise whatever. It is, therefore, a religion without a God. We might even say, it is an ethics without a religion, were it not that the pure negative movement of thought tends in its logical result to dissolve the moral as well as the religious life; for the opposition of the moral to the natural loses all its force when it is made absolute. When consciousness is thus brought into

complete discord with itself, atonement is not possible. The only resource left is that, in the language of the Buddhists themselves, the 'light' of consciousness should be 'blown out.'

In Greece the subjective movement of thought took a higher character, as it was a recoil from a much higher kind of objective religion—a religion in which the object worshipped was represented almost exclusively in the form of man. For, as man is a thinking subject as well as an object, so the worship of anthropomorphic deities was already a disguised worship of a spiritual principle; and with the advance of Greek art and poetry this disguise became more and more transparent. The unity of nature which shone through the diversity of the Vedic polytheism, was indeed concealed and lost in the multiplicity of the humanised gods; but as the consciousness of the ideal meaning of these 'fair humanities of old religion' awoke, it could not but prepare men's minds for the conception of the spirituality of God. In this way the diversity of gods which have emerged from the unity of nature, tend again to lose themselves in the unity of spirit. This tendency manifests itself in the history of Greek religion by the early exaltation of Zeus, who is placed at the head of all the other gods as an absolute monarch, while the other divine powers are reduced into his ministers; but

it reaches its logical result only in the philosophy of Greece.

The earliest Greek philosophy sought to discover an objective principle of unity in the world; but the only unity it reached was the pantheistic unity of a highest principle or substance, which remains one with itself through all the changes of phenomena. In the philosophy of Heraclitus the leading thought is still that of a law of necessity, which subjects to itself the endless play of the contingent; just as the humanised gods were subordinated to an inscrutable fate which they could not avert or alter. But with Anaxagoras the idea of a brute necessity subjecting all to itself disappears, and in its place comes the idea of a pure spiritual principle, which subdues the necessity of nature and uses it as its own instrument. "All things were in chaos till reason came and arranged them." It is the judgment of Aristotle that in giving utterance to this principle, Anaxagoras was speaking the first sober word of Greek philosophy, while all before him had been like men talking at random. In truth, the era of subjective reflexion began with this saying; and Socrates was only following out the same idea in a new application when he made conscious reason the main authority in morals, and demanded that all institutions, customs, and rules should justify themselves before its bar. Like

Buddha, Socrates called upon men to be their own deliverers:

> "Once read thine own breast right,
> And thou hast done with fears,
> Man gets no other light,
> Search he a thousand years.
> Sink in thyself! *There* ask what ails thee, at that shrine."[1]

Socrates, indeed, did not set the subjective *against* the objective. On the contrary, according to Xenophon, he tried to prove by the argument from design that the world is the manifestation of intelligence. But he was the first to lay emphasis on the subjective, and to teach, as it was expressed by a later writer, that "it is by the god within that we know the god without." For he set up the reason of the individual as the highest authority and guide of his moral life, and demanded that the law of the state should vindicate itself before the inward tribunal.

The same thought runs through all the works of his great followers, Plato and Aristotle. Both of these maintain that the world is a rational system which reaches its culminating manifestation in the life of man. They admit, indeed, that reason must speak to man from without, through the visible world of nature and also through the laws and customs of civil society, ere it can be awakened to speak within him. They even admit that the majority of men are

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Empedocles on Etna.*

not capable of rising to the stage of self-conscious reason at all, and that they can have reason developed in them only so far as to accept its dictates from others. Still, the ultimate authority and motive power of social life is for them the conscious reason of the philosopher. And they hold that that reason never can speak to men from without with the clear self-evidencing power with which it speaks within, to those who are capable of hearing it. "It is in the nature of things that practice should fall short of the truth of theory."[1] Facts will not conform to ideas: but so much the worse for the facts. In the outward world there is a resisting power—a brute necessity, which in another point of view is contingency—and this makes it impossible that pure reason should ever realise itself there. For, though reason, in the metaphorical language of the Timaeus, tries to "persuade necessity," its persuasions are never quite successful. In Aristotle, we even find an anticipation of the doctrine of development, or at least the idea of a scale of being which reaches its summit in man. But the rational principle in man is not included in this hierarchy of nature. The pure reason in man is severed from the lower life of sense and desire, somewhat in the same way in which God, as pure self-consciousness, is separated from the world of change and contingency. Hence also God cannot be

[1] Plato, *Republic*, 473 A.

adequately revealed in nature, either in its parts or in the whole system of finite things. And, for the same reason, the moral activity of man, which has to do with the regulation of his passions and the ordering of his outward social life, is regarded as essentially inferior to the pure activity of thought in its inner converse with itself.

Thus we may fairly say that in Aristotle and Plato, as in Socrates, the original naïve confidence of man in the outward manifestation of reason in nature and in human life, has been lost; and its place is only imperfectly supplied by the idea of a reason which, in order that it may realise itself, subdues and transforms a foreign matter, but is never able perfectly to assimilate and absorb the material upon which it works. In these philosophies, therefore, the subjective movement of Greek thought is only for a moment arrested. In morals, the attempt to restore the limited social order of the Greek state on the basis of conscious reason, was doomed to failure, and the magnificent effort of two great philosophers to recombine the new principle with the old form, could only hasten the natural process of decay. The political idealism of Plato and Aristotle was a gigantic attempt to pour new wine into old bottles. Nor need we wonder that, after Aristotle, philosophy becomes purely individualistic and subjective, and that morality and religion begin to be conceived as bound up, not

with the consciousness of objects, but almost exclusively with the consciousness of self.

Stoicism, which is the highest form of this subjective and individualistic philosophy, is a product of the same movement of recoil upon the self which we find exemplified in Buddhism; but it differs from Buddhism as the Greek religion and the Greek social morality differed from the Brahmanic polytheism and the caste system of India. It agrees with Buddhism in its subjective tendency; for, as the Buddhist rejected the limitations of the system of caste[1] and fell back upon the inner life of the self which is the same in all, teaching that *he* is the true 'Brahman' who purifies his soul, whatever may be his caste or outward rank; so the Stoic taught that the highest good is open to the slave Epictetus as to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. It agrees with Buddhism further in its abstract benevolence; for the universal pity and charity which was enjoined on the Buddhist towards all mankind, and even toward all living creatures, is closely akin to the philanthropy which made the Stoic "count nothing human alien to him," and regard himself as a citizen not of any particular state but of the world. The difference was that, along with the

[1] Buddhism, it is to be observed, did not seek to overturn caste. It treated it as an external and indifferent distinction. It dealt with it in the same way in which St. Paul deals with slavery (1 Cor. vii. 21).

Universalism which made the Stoic condemn his own passions and all the objects and ends to which they were directed, there went a distinct conviction that the universal principle of reason is realised in each man as an individual self. The Stoic was not, therefore, in danger of thinking that the highest good lies in the extinction of self-consciousness, the loss of the individual in the universal. Rather, he held that the individual man as such *is* universal, that each man *is* embodied reason, and that therefore the absolute good is realised, or is capable of being realised, in him. In this centre-point of selfhood all the good of the universe is concentrated, and the exclusion of all extraneous interests from its life is desirable, only because it enables it to be a law and an end to itself. The Stoic empties his life of objective interests, but it is because he has in his own inner consciousness an interest which outweighs and includes them all. His morality is, therefore, not the morality that loses the self in the absolute, but the morality that sees the absolute in the free determination of the self by its own law.

Yet, as this law is one that springs, not from the nature of the self as this individual, but from the universal reason in him, the subjective morality of the Stoic has a side which is essentially connected with religion, and, indeed, it easily becomes itself a religion. In the consciousness of self we have a principle, which

is one and the same in every rational being, and which, as it is conceived by the Stoic as an absolute principle, must be to him at once the source and the end of all things. Hence, for the Stoic, pure self-determination—that determination by the inner law of reason which he substitutes for all determination by objective ends—is one with determination by God, who is the principle of unity alike in the inner and in the outer world, the source of the universe, and the end for which it exists. The paradox of Stoicism is this immediate conversion of that which is most individual into that which is most universal, of the subject into the object, of self-determination into an obedience to God. For, "*deo parere libertas est*"; to be free or determined by our inmost self is to be guided by a divine hand. Stoicism is thus a curious illustration of the truth that absolute opposites convert into each other. It is a self-isolation which turns at once into universal sympathy; a self-exalting pride that seems to rest wholly on itself, and which yet at a turn of the hand is changed into the humble sense of being a mere instrument in the hand of a higher power. It is a pessimism which finds unreason and evil in all particular things, in the whole course of the outward world, and which, therefore, withdraws itself from the outward upon the inner life. But at the same time, in virtue of the absoluteness of the inner principle on which it falls

back, it becomes an optimism *in general*, a belief that the whole universe is the manifestation of a divine reason. In fact, the development of Stoicism is just the exhibition of the contradiction of seeking the absolute in the subject as opposed to, and exclusive of, the object; while, by its very definition as the absolute, it must transcend this distinction.

But, in spite of this innate and incurable contradiction, Stoicism has in it an element of the highest truth, if only we view it in the light of the idea of development, and consider it, therefore, not as a *result* in which the mind of man can rest, but as a *stage* in its spiritual growth. For, though the subject as altogether severed from the object is an empty abstraction, it is through the recoil upon the subject in opposition to the object that man first becomes conscious of his freedom—conscious of that in him which lifts him above all objects he knows, and which unites him to the divine principle of all existence and of all thought. It is through this recoil alone that he can realise his spiritual individuality, and thereby break away from the power of nature, and also of the naturalistic forms in which truth is at first revealed to him. It is only through this recoil that he learns to recognise that the simple bond of humanity is a real bond, and that it is deeper than all ties of family and nation, just because the self is that in him which is most universal and independent

of all particular characteristics or relations of his being. While, therefore, it is not true that morality depends upon the self-isolation of the individual from all other men and things, it is true that he who never thus isolates himself will never find his way to the deepest sources of moral strength. It is not true that within himself man is absolutely alone, but it is true that he who never has felt the solitude of an inner life, will never discover the real nature of the tie that binds him to nature, to his fellowmen, and to God.

LECTURE FOURTEENTH.

THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL.

Summary View of the Development of Subjective and of Objective Religion—Moral Strength of Subjective Religion—The Opposition of Spirit to Nature—Semitic Tendency to see God in the Destructive rather than the Productive Powers of Nature—The Hebrew Transition from Nature to Spirit—The Religion of Sublimity as opposed to the Religion of Beauty—Opposition of Prophet and Priest, Moral and Ceremonial—Transition from a National to a Universal Religion—Rise of Moral Individualism—The Idea of a Covenant between God and Man—Limits of the Development of Jewish Religion—Its History as an Illustration of the Principle of Development.

In this lecture, which is the last of the present course, I propose to speak of the Religion of Israel, the highest form of subjective religion; but it may be useful first to recall the results which thus far we have reached. Objective religion, as we have seen, represents the Divine Being, who is the principle of unity in all existence, objective and subjective, in an external and therefore a natural form. It, therefore, bases the social unity of man with man upon their common relation to some power or element in

nature, which is regarded as the parent or founder of the society and is worshipped as its god. Yet the power or element in nature which is thus worshipped is not universally or even commonly taken as a being like man. It is, indeed, personified, and so invested with some guise of humanity; but usually, at least in the earliest stages of religion, it is some object or class of objects in the inorganic or organic world other than man. With such a religion goes a morality which is not yet other, or at least is not yet recognised as other, than the social obligation connected with the natural bond of kinship, and which of course is limited by that bond. A certain widening of the scope of this naturalistic morality takes place at the stage in which the great elemental powers—the heavens, the sun and moon, etc.—are raised to supremacy over the totems, or tribal and family deities. And a still deeper transformation of it takes place whenever, as especially among the Greeks, but also among the Romans, the Germans and the Celts, the naturalistic gods are humanised; or, what amounts to the same thing, wherever the form and nature of man are taken as those which alone can be attributed to the beings who are regarded as divine. For nature cannot be put under man's feet without some discernment in man of qualities which are not merely natural. In such an anthropomorphic re-

ligion it soon begins to be seen that, if spirit grows out of nature, yet it goes beyond it and transforms it. The poetic exaltation of man and the humanising of nature, in the poetry and art of Greece, prepare the way for a philosophy that inverts the relation of natural and spiritual, and substitutes the law of freedom for the law of necessity. Thus Plato and Aristotle tell us that the state begins to exist with a view to life, but that it maintains its existence with a view to the good or noble life—the life of culture and moral and intellectual excellence. They also tell us that that which is last as to origin is first as to the nature of things; and that it is, therefore, to the highest results of the state that we have to look to find out its true *raison d'être.* But when the spiritual source and end of the social life of man is recognised, it becomes necessary to seek the basis of his social obligations in his inner nature as a self-conscious being, and not in any outward tie of blood relationship. The ultimate result of this new perception is, therefore, a recoil from the object upon the subject, and the exaltation of the inner life at the expense of the outer. Each subject now finds the law of his being written, not without him in the order of the society to which he belongs, but within, in the 'fleshly tables of the heart'; and his relation to God is no longer mediated for him by his mem-

bership in a society, but it becomes a direct relation of spirit to spirit, a consciousness which is bound up with the consciousness of self, and which indeed can hardly be distinguished from the consciousness of a better self within us. The dialogue of the soul with God is an experience of its own inner life, into which no outer voice can intrude and which needs no outward mediation:—

"Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet,
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet."

Now, this recoil upon the subject as against the object, upon thought as against perception and imagination, upon spirit as against nature, always has in it something harsh and violent. Elevating God above and opposing Him to all finite things and beings, it tears asunder the bonds of nature, and rends the veil of art and poetry. It hardens men in isolation from the world and even from their fellowmen. It "cuts the universe in two with a hatchet," and refuses to recognise the gentle transitions by which beauty leads man from a lower to a higher truth. It sets the individual man alone with himself and God, and makes him regard everything else as comparatively indifferent. And in doing so it is apt to lose the balance of truth, as decidedly as the superstition which sees God only without and not within the soul. Nay, we might even say that,

in the ultimate logic of it, it loses the consciousness of God altogether; for a God who is within and not without, like a God who is without and not within, is no God at all. And with this loss of the object must ultimately come loss even of that subjective life to which the sacrifice is made; for the subjective has no meaning except in relation to the objective world, and, as the Buddhist saw, its freedom from that world turns into its own extinction. Nevertheless, this concentration upon the subjective is a necessary stage in the development of man both in religion and morality. Without it, the moral law in its universality could not have been separated from all natural impulses, even those based upon ties of kinship or nationality; and without it, religion could never have cleared itself from the superstitious awe of external powers. The one-sidedness of objective religion could never have been overcome without the opposite one-sidedness of a morality and religion of the inner life; nor could the universal have been realised as a principle that reveals itself in the particular—but which is not to be confused with the particular—unless it were once for all set against all particulars, even at the risk of being emptied of all its contents. An abstract 'ethical monotheism,' which is the typical form of subjective religion, could not elevate and idealise nature or the natural life of man; it could not fur-

nish the binding force necessary to make humanity one family. But its purifying power, its power to root out naturalistic superstitions and to cleanse the moral life of man, can scarcely be doubted by anyone who contrasts the life of the nations which have, with that of those nations which have not, been subjected to its influences. In more or less adequate forms, as Buddhism, as Stoicism, as Judaism, as Islamism, as Puritanism, it is the expression of that necessary recoil by which the spirit of man turns away from nature, and even from that second nature of social custom and belief, which is its own unconscious product: a recoil without which it could never truly find itself. Even when it has become fanatical, its fierceness has been a cleansing fire. Even when it has been violent and iconoclastic, when it has refused to see even in the work of a Phidias anything more than a dumb idol, or in the highest product of the art of a Raphael anything more than, as John Knox said, "a pented brod," it has been the exaggeration of an aspect of truth to which it had become imperative that men should attend. We may regret with Goethe the losses which culture sustains in the victory of one half-truth over another, but it is certain that in the growth of man's spirit such losses are inevitable; or at least it has not hitherto been found possible to avoid them. It is hardly possible for man to

appreciate a new aspect of things, especially of his own life, without being for a time unjust to that which has preceded it. A spiritualism which despises nature, a monotheism which separates God from his world, and a subjective morality which divorces the inner from the outer life and breaks the organic bond between the individual and society,—these cannot be conceived as a final goal of progress in which man can rest. But they mark an essential stage in the development of man, a stage through which he must pass, ere he can reach a consciousness of the divine as a principle which reveals itself in all the differences of finite existence and overcomes them.

The highest and, as it might be called, the *typical* example of this kind of religion, is Judaism, and to it, therefore, it will be advisable for us to devote most of our attention. What is said in this lecture, however, must be regarded as an anticipatory sketch, which I hope to fill out with more detail in my next course of lectures.

The Greeks, as we have seen, by idealising nature ultimately reach a point of view from which nature and that which is natural in man are cast into the background; and the pure inward self-determination of reason, which in another aspect is determination by God, becomes all in all. The Hebrews reach the same goal in a more direct way. Partly because they wanted the Greek capacity for apprehending the

spiritual *in* the natural, they had less difficulty in rising *above* nature and attaining to a purely spiritual conception of God. It is true that this characteristic has been somewhat exaggerated, and that later students have found many traces of an earlier nature-worship among the Jews. The theory of Renan that the Semitic race are naturally monotheistic, cannot be maintained in the face of what we know of other Semitic races, and even of the race of Israel itself. But there is *this* element of truth in it, that the Semitic family, and especially the branch of the Semitic family to which Israel belonged, tended to recognise the manifestation of a divine power rather in the more threatening and anomalous aspects of nature, than in its brighter and more genial aspects, or in its ordinary phenomena of production and increase. It was from the tempest, the tumult of heaven and earth, the thunders of Sinai and the earthquake that devoured the unbelieving, that this nation learnt its first religious lessons. And, if her prophets early rose above the Moloch-worship which was found among some of her neighbours, yet it was not till a comparatively late period that the nation as a whole freed itself from all traces of it. If the prophets ultimately taught that the still small voice within is a higher manifestation of God than the whirlwind or the earthquake or the fire, yet even in their sublimest poetry, it is these stormy agencies that they chose as the

symbols of the divine, rather than the more ordinary and apparently regular phenomena of nature. The action of God on the world is generally regarded by them as disturbing, transforming, miraculously interfering with the usual order of things, rather than as establishing and maintaining that order; it is treated, to use the language of geology, as catastrophic rather than evolutionary. Or, if nature is viewed as revealing Him, it is rather negatively than positively, by the way in which she trembles before Him, or shrinks up into nothing in His presence. The poetry of Israel is the poetry not of beauty but of sublimity.[1] Its leading thought is not that of the immanence of God in nature, but of His transcendence,—the transcendent might and glory of a Being for whom "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt-offering," and who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing." The Jewish writers, in fact, regard nature rather as a negative than as a positive starting-point for thought. They use the might and majesty of natural powers as showing what God is only by their nothingness before Him, and their incapacity to express and manifest Him. The strength of the everlasting hills is a *suggestion* of God's omnipotence, but nothing more than a suggestion; the order and adap-

[1] Hence Hegel calls Judaism the religion of *Sublimity*, as contrasted with the Greek religion of *Beauty*. See *Phil. der Religion*, ii. 39 *seq.*

tation of nature is a *suggestion* of His wisdom, but nothing more than a suggestion, which tells as much by what it cannot, as by what it can express. To take it as more than this would be the idolatry which confuses the Creator with the things He has made. *He* has called all these things into being, and by a word[1] He can annihilate them, and they reveal Him only by their instant obedience to Him. He speaks, and they are; He speaks again, and they cease to be. Hence the Hebrew prophet looked upon nature almost as indifferently—that is, with as little sense of an abiding divinity in it—as a scientific man who has taught himself to think of it as a system of phenomena which can be explained on mechanical principles. It was to him only a dead weapon in the hand of the Almighty, which He had created and which He could use and destroy at pleasure. It was not and never could be to him what it was to the pantheistic poetry of the East, or what it is

[1] The transition through which the meaning of the expression 'Word of God' passes in the interval between the Old Testament and the Gospel of St. John, contains in it a whole history of the development of religion. The prophets used it as conveying the idea that God works directly and immediately upon the world *without* any mediation, *without* going out of Himself or communicating Himself to that which His will has created. Christian theology uses it just to express the reverse of this: that God does manifest Himself in and communicates Himself to nature and humanity through His Son, "who is the express image of His Person."

to the revived and spiritualised pantheism of Goethe or Wordsworth, the living garment of deity, a manifestation of God which cannot be separated from His existence.

Now, for a religious consciousness of this kind, it is obviously much easier to pass *beyond* nature. One who hears the voice of God "dividing the flames of fire" and "breaking the cedars of Lebanon," who realises His presence as a wasting, desolating exhibition of force throned on the mountain summits of the desert rather than in the brightness and beneficence of the fertilising sun, finds it less difficult to get away from nature altogether, and to lift his mind to that which is purely spiritual. He is easily accessible to the idea that the infinite cannot be contained in any finite form, or represented in any finite image. His God is already on the way to become a God of pure thought, who cannot be adequately represented either in perception or imagination. As Schiller says to the astronomers, "I admit that the heavenly bodies are the most sublime of objects in space; but it is not in space that the sublime can be found."[1] The abstraction that lifts God above every finite form, because "even the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him," is already preparing the way for the idea that He can only be revealed within, and not without. And this

[1] Euer Gegenstand ist der erhabenste, freilich, im Raume,
Aber, Freunde, im Raum wohnt das Erhabene nicht.

is just the transition which we find achieved and expressed by the prophets of Israel. It was their great inspiration which changed the fear of that which is greater than nature into the reverence for that which is spiritual, and thereby separated their religion once for all from the horrors and sensualities of Baal and Moloch worship, which corrupted and poisoned the moral life of the races that were their nearest kindred. This transition is, in fact, the characteristic movement of thought that has stamped itself most deeply on the pages of the Old Testament,—from the period in which Abraham learned to reject the idea of human sacrifice to the latest and highest utterance of the Psalms, which declare that God is one who prefers mercy to sacrifice. It is, so to speak, the negation of nature immediately passing into the assertion of spirit.

But if the strength of the religious thought of Israel is that it is continually engaged in making this transition, its weakness is that it never quite completes it. Its whole history is the history of the war of prophet against priest, who, however, have always to come to terms; for neither can as yet do without the other. The nation may be said to possess an outward worship, *just* in order that it may transcend it and look down upon it; to maintain the temple, the altar, and the sacrifice, *just* in order that it may teach by contrast that the true temple of God is the soul of man, and that the true priest is he who offers the sacrifice of

a broken and contrite heart to God. Hence the last outcome of the life of the nation was, on the one hand, the Levitical law which hedged round the life of the Jewish devotee with the minutest prescriptions of outward service and ritual; and, on the other hand, the book of Psalms, which expresses, in language that the highest Christian devotion is glad to accept as its own, the inward yearning of the soul that turns away from all outward forms as empty and worthless, and is content with nothing short of the deepest inward union with God. "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire. Then said I, Lo! I come, I delight to do Thy will, O God. Yea, Thy law is within my heart." [1]

When we look at the outward national life of Israel, we find the same transition presenting itself in another form. The Hebrew nation begins, like other nations, with a national God and a morality which is conceived mainly as the realisation of the bond of kinship between the children of Abraham. Yet, characteristically, the connexion of Israel with its God, from the earliest time of which we have record, is regarded rather as the relation of subjects to their Lord, than that of children to their father. Nay, we may even say that it is regarded as the relation of soldiers to their general; for the cradle of the religious life of Israel was the desert camp,

[1] Psalms xl. 6.

and Jehovah was at first but a God of battles, under whose guidance a loose aggregation of tribes was converted, first into an army, and then into a nation. And as the nation was founded, so it was again and again restored, by warlike leaders whom the inspiration of Jehovah raised up, to assert its unity and independence against Moab and Ammon, against the Canaanites and the Philistines. Hence we may say that the people of Israel are at first less close to their God than most other nations, being merely His servants and not His children. Yet this very negation of natural relationship made it easier for the Israelite to rise to the conception of a spiritual unity which is closer than any merely natural bond. The spiritual fatherhood of God was the ultimate message of Israel to the world, just because it began by setting aside the idea of His being the natural parent of the race.

In the pre-Christian history of the Jews, at least two steps are taken in this direction. In the earliest times, as I have indicated, we have good evidence that Jehovah was regarded merely as the national god, the Lord of Hosts, who made war at the head of the nation against its enemies and their gods. And, as a national god, he was conceived to be related, not to individuals as such, but only to the nation as a collective whole. So far, therefore, the morality of Israel was like the morality

of other early races—a morality which had for its main principles, the *solidarity* of the kinship within itself and the entire *exclusion* of other kinships from all the charities and privileges of life. And the religion of Israel in this period was just the consecration of this unity and this opposition. But, as the view of the relation of Israel to its God becomes spiritualised, it tends to break away from these merely national limits in two different ways. It tends to become at once individualised and universalised, *i.e.* it tends to become a subjective relation of the individual to his God, and at the same time, being based on subjective conditions, it tends to be regarded as not confined to Israel alone. I say, it *tends* in this direction. For though, during the pre-Christian history of the nation, it is continually moving towards this goal, it never completely attains it. Stubbornly rooted in national exclusiveness and national privilege, it is always striving to reach beyond both. The higher mind of the Hebrew nation is continually reacting against a prejudice which it can never conquer, which at least it never *could* conquer, until the founder of Christianity broke away the spiritual fruit of its labours from the tree on which it first grew, and planted it out in the wide field of the world. The end, however, is already foreshadowed in the earliest of the prophets whose

writings have come down to us. As God was not the natural father of the race, He was not to be conceived—so Amos the inspired herdsman of Tekoa already taught—as their unconditional patron or partisan; but His favour for them was bound up with the moral relation of *their* will to His. If Israel was privileged to hear the voice of God, it had upon it the weight of a greater responsibility, which must bring with it a greater punishment for failure. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, *therefore* I will punish you for all your iniquities." It is, however, impossible to conceive such a spiritual relation as one of privilege. By the very fact that it is regarded as a moral relation, it cannot be consistently represented as a relation between a particular god on one side and a particular nation on the other. The God who stands in a purely ethical relation to His worshippers is of necessity the one and only God, and the men to whom He stands in that relation are necessarily men of any and every race or people. Further, as such an ethical relation is one which involves inward conditions, it must be a relation of the individual as such to God, and not one in which the individual is lost in the family or the nation. Hence the later prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, set themselves against the idea of a collective responsibility for good or evil; and they

take their stand on the principle of ethical individualism, that each moral agent must answer for his own doings. "What mean ye that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are Mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die."[1] "Everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."[2]

Thus the three truths—the spirituality of God, the separate moral responsibility of the individual, and the universality of the relation of the one God to all men—are only three different aspects of one thought which cannot be severed from each other; and with whichsoever of these aspects we begin, we must necessarily be driven ere long to admit the other two. What we find in the Hebrew prophets is, therefore, a national religion in the very process of breaking away on every side from its national limitations. And the transitionary character of Judaism shows itself just in the continual contrast and conflict of the most stubborn and intolerant claims of national privilege, with a conception of worship which reduces it to the

[1] Ezekiel xviii. 2. [2] Jeremiah xxxi. 30.

direct subjective relation of the finite to the infinite Spirit.

The same idea may be illustrated in another way. It is a distinctive characteristic of Jewish thought that, instead of resting the spiritual upon the natural, and basing the moral bond of man with his fellow-man and with God on the physical fact of common blood, it treated the bond of nationality as deriving all its sacredness from a spiritual relation of Israel to God, which had been established by a special contract or covenant of obedience. Now, the idea of such a covenant might at first seem to be favourable to the conception of national privilege; but it is really opposed to it, in so far as it bases the relation between God and man upon a spiritual act of man himself. And this opposition could not but manifest itself more and more clearly, as the obedience required in the divine covenant detached itself from the accidents of ceremony and ritual. A covenant 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God,' could be made only with a God who was identified with the universal principle of right; and it was a covenant into which all men were equally called upon and equally entitled to enter. The goal towards which the whole development of Jewish religion points, the ultimate outcome of the teaching of prophets and psalmists, is, therefore, the consciousness that each

individual spirit of man has an inward relation to the Father of spirits, the God who is the source at once of all spiritual and of all natural existence. Logically carried out, such teaching could end only in a subjective and individualistic religion, a religion of the inner as opposed to the outer life.

At the same time, while this is the goal of the development, the ultimate outcome of the religion, we have to remember that the religion exists only in the process, and not in the result. In other words, we are not to suppose that the full import of the religion can be seen simply by looking to the end or logical issue to which it ultimately brings its adherents, without reference to the whole movement by which it reaches that issue; and also, it may be added, without reference to the manner in which that issue prepares the way for a still further advance. For the result attained is in itself imperfect, and, its imperfection once seen, it becomes the beginning of a new movement of development. A purely subjective religion would be a narrow and limited thing, if we regarded it by itself, nay, as we have already seen, it is self-contradictory; for the subject as divorced from the object loses all meaning. But the real value of such religion lay just in this, that it was the final term of one stage of evolution and the beginning of another. It is the great error of dogmatism to forget that 'ideas are living things which

have hands and feet,' and that, if we fix them as definite results, no more and no less, we take away their life and power. The life and power of Jewish religion lay in the process towards the universality, which was also a process towards the subjectivity, of religion; but it did not attain this latter point till its very latest stage, when it began to harden into a formalism. Thus the doctrine for which the prophets contended—that religion must be a purely subjective relation to a spiritual God, was a relative truth. And it was of the greatest importance to emphasise that truth at a time when the great enemy of religion was a superstition which treated God as a merely external power, who secured privileges to men in virtue of their belonging to a particular kinship and of their performing certain outward rites. But, so soon as the end was reached and the thought began to arise that religion is *merely* subjective and individual, so soon as it became dissociated from the social bonds of family and nationality, it was in danger of producing an unhealthy division of the inner from the outer life—an opposition of the universal principle to all the particulars in which it could be realised. The sense of national privilege could be safely set aside only when it became possible to conceive of a unity of all men on the ground of a spiritual relationship,—a unity which at once transcends all

natural bonds and gives them their relative value. The feeling of the immediate relation of the individual subject to God could cease to be connected with obedience to a Divine King and Lawgiver who spoke to a special nation through the thunders of Sinai, only when God was regarded as a Universal Father of spirits. For only such a God can be represented as the immanent principle of all life and being, who unites all men to each other as members of one family, and who therefore is manifested in the inner life and consciousness of each, only as, at the same time, He unites him to all his fellows and to the world.

The long toil of Jewish history; the struggle of the spirit of monotheism with the infection of the sensuous nature-worships of the kindred peoples, and with the darker elements of its own earlier faith; the destruction of the nation itself as an outward secular power; the sufferings of its captivity, and the great prophetic inspirations with which it consoled itself; its revival no longer as a separate state, but rather as a kind of monotheistic church, holding itself apart from the idolatry of other peoples; the long vicissitude of fortune in which it maintained its stubborn Puritanic protest against the world, and nourished in its bosom the unquenchable hope of a Messiah who should redeem at once itself and the world: this whole historic process furnishes perhaps the most striking of

all illustrations of religious evolution. In other words, it exhibits to us a typical instance of the development of a religious idea from lower to higher forms, till finally it exhausts itself and dies, only however to rise again in a religion of a still higher type. Nor has this illustration of development lost any of its force in consequence of those modern investigations, which have so greatly altered the prevailing view of the relations of the Old Testament writings. If there be good reason to regard the books of the Pentateuch as, partly at least, an *ex post facto* reconstruction of early history, in conformity with the views of a later time; if there be good reason to suppose that the earliest religion of Israel was the worship of a national God, who was revealed mainly in the more gloomy and terrible aspects of nature, and that it was only by the long struggle of the prophets that this worship of terror was changed into the reverence for a God of justice and mercy,—such results of criticism do not really tend to lower but rather to raise the value of that history, as a support to our faith in a Divine Being who has been gradually revealing Himself, not by signs in heaven or on earth, but through the natural working of man's own spirit. On the contrary, such applications of the idea of development to human history, seem to be now for the first time yielding us rational evidences for those religious beliefs which formerly were supported by a kind of artificial scaf-

folding. To discern the steady movement by which, in continual struggle with nature and with himself, man is ever advancing to a deeper comprehension of his own nature and a clearer recognition of the divine power which is the beginning and end of his life, this, it seems to me, is a far more real help in dealing with the doubts that inevitably beset us as to the ultimate meaning of human existence, than any miracle that could bring us into relation with a spiritual world which was essentially divorced from the world of our experience. And it is something more than a happy coincidence that the same intellectual progress, which has incidentally weakened some of the adventitious supports of religion, should also have brought with it this more natural and rational basis of belief. In this light "Moses and the prophets" may be more to us than "if one rose from the dead"; for the evidence thus given is not externally brought to the aid of ideas which have no immediate connexion therewith. It is simply the evidence derived from the growth of the ideas themselves.

In my second course of lectures I shall endeavour to follow more closely the development of the subjective principle in the Jewish religion, and especially to throw some light on the connexion between its ultimate form and the Christianity which at once fulfilled and destroyed it. And then I shall attempt, so far as time and ability will permit me, to show what is the

principle or germinative thought presented to us in the recorded words of the founder of Christianity, and how it has gradually developed into that system of life and thought which has passed, and is still passing, through so many phases.

END OF VOL. I.

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